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THE POTENTIAL OF PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Rural community development is a complex and time-consuming process, the outcomes of which take a variety of forms and may not be visible for some time. Conventional approaches to rural community development evaluation have tended to focus on the tangible outcomes, although more recently particularly in an overseas development context there has been a move toward the adoption of a more participatory evaluation approach. This type of approach involves all programme stakeholders and examines both tangible and less tangible development outcomes. This research explores the potential of this kind of participatory approach for the evaluation of rural community development programmes in a Western European context.

The first part of this research involved a review of rural development in general and the challenges rural community development in particular poses for evaluation and the different approaches used to evaluate it. The second part involved the development and implementation of a participatory evaluation approach in two case studies: the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme in Ireland and Community Development in Laggan, a small village in the Scottish Highlands. The research examined the outcomes of the process of implementation, the results of the evaluation, and also reviewed the longer-term effect of the evaluation some months after the completion of the formal evaluation process.

The participatory evaluation approach under investigation was found to provide a trustworthy and transferable approach that produced a series of relevant, timely, and utilisable findings and recommendations. The participative nature of implementation process was also found to have created of a series of distinct outcomes which contributed to the ongoing processes of participation, capacity building and partnership within each case study. Participatory evaluation can as a consequence be seen to have significant potential as an approach to rural community development evaluation and as a tool for rural community development itself. The study concludes with an examination of the validity of the research methodology and implications of the research for rural community development theory in particular and rural development theory in general,

DEDICATION

For Gerry and Eamonn

The one who never doubted, the other who reminded me of the other options

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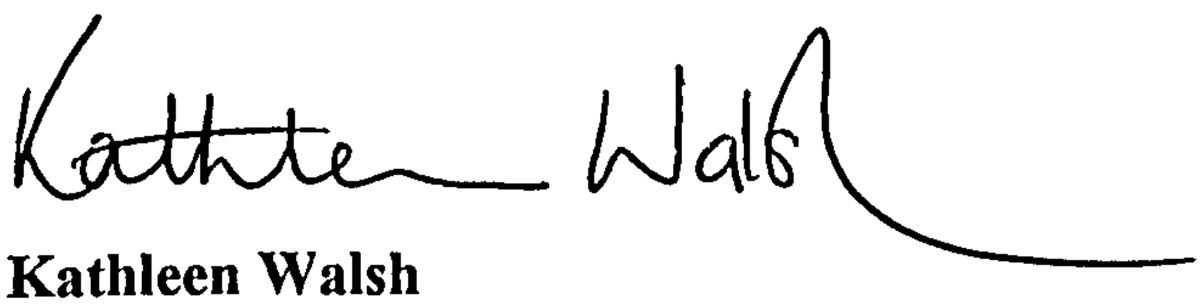
Go raibh maith agaibh go leir.

AUTHORS DECLARATION

The work contains in this thesis is the sole effort of the Author. The views expressed in this theses are those of the Author, not the College or University.



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INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

European rural areas are undergoing a period of profound change. Rural areas are subject to major structural adjustments, both as a result of changes in rural economies and societies and as a result of the Maastricht Treaty, the Single European Act, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT), European Monetary Union (EMU) and the enlargement of the European Union (Government of Ireland, 1999; Marsden, 1998; Shucksmith & Chapman, 1998; NESC, 1994). The problems of rural areas differ from location to location but generally relate to the restructuring of agriculture, poor infrastructure and service provision, high levels of out-migration, low levels of investment and low population densities (NESC, 1994). They differ due to differential resource allocations and impact unevenly on different social groups within these areas with several groups facing what Mernagh and Cummins (1992, p.4) term 'the risk of economic and social exclusion'. A range of initiatives at different levels has been established to address the problems of rural areas and more recently of particular groups within rural areas. These initiatives have taken a variety of forms and vary enormously in their scope, nature and approach. They include the provision of infra-structure, the promotion of economic activities and the establishment of specific sectoral programmes while more recently they have begun to concentrate on the need to build local human capacity (Padaki, 1996).

The development of rural communities is increasingly regarded as an important objective and an important process within rural development. The process of rural community development can be characterised as a multidimensional approach to development at a local level, which aims to promote the development of local communities through local participation and partnership with statutory organisations and the private sector. Its central focus is to enable rural communities to help themselves address their problems at a local level, thereby contributing to their long-term survival (Asby, 1996; Bryden & Mather, 1996; NESC, 1994; Buller & Wright, 1990). This concept of locally based community

development is not new. There is a long history of self-help in many rural areas, which has resulted in a number of small scale successfully run locally based initiatives (Ashby, 1996; Storey, 1995; Van der Ploeg & Long, 1994; Walsh 1992; Cuddy, 1991; Varley, 1991; Keane, 1990; Rodgers, 1987; Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986). The small-scale nature of these initiatives (and others like them) and the locally based nature of their outcomes has made them easy to overlook, in comparison with larger scale, more resource intensive, higher profile initiatives.

However, the restructuring of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the mid 1980s prompted the European Commission and the governments of member states to reconsider the potential of locally based community orientated approaches to rural development. The publication in 1988 of the 'The Future of Rural Society' (European Commission, 1988) marked a critical turning point in this process. It represented a radical new departure in development thinking by the European Commission, recognising the need to encourage local action to assist rural communities to develop their own areas, while also stressing the need for an integrated approach to resource development. It put the concepts of rural community development firmly on the wider development agenda (Mannion, 1996; NESC, 1994; Clout, 1993; Cuddy; 1991). It also put pre-existing locally based community development projects centre stage. As a result, a series of new national and European initiatives was launched, based on the principles of local community development in partnership with statutory bodies and private enterprise. Examples of these types of initiatives include the National Pilot Integrated Development Programme launched by the Irish Government in 1988 and the European wide LEADER[1] programme launched by the European Commission in 1992. Substantial amounts of public funds were diverted to assist in the establishment of locally based rural community development initiatives (Midmore, 1998; Kearney *et al.* 1997; Midmore, 1997; Kearney *et al.* 1994). This prompts the question, how successful are these approaches in tackling the long-term problems of rural areas?

[1] LEADER: Liaison Entre Action de Development de l'Economie Rurale/ links between actions for the development of the rural economy

One problem with these approaches is that the ability of communities to engage in rural community development is not evenly distributed. Certain communities are clearly more capable of effecting this type of development than others (Murray & Dunn, 1995; Keane, 1990). The ability of particular communities to act can also be affected by variety of economic, political and local contextual factors. Relatedly, a key criticism of current approaches to rural community development is that they tend to view 'the rural' and 'rural communities' as homogenous. They therefore fail to address and adequately tackle the ongoing processes of marginalisation and exclusion of particular groups and individuals within rural areas (LRDP, 1999; NESC, 1997). Disadvantaged groups in rural areas include: long term unemployed people; people with disabilities; young people (in particular those at risk e.g. early school leavers), people who have not benefited from formal education; women (in particular lone parents); homeless people; travellers and minority ethnic groups; the elderly (in particular those living alone, suffering from ill health and/or with low income) (Skinner, 1997). The inability of current approaches to rural community development to effectively target these diverse groups and their needs has meant that many of these groups have remained excluded from ongoing rural community development initiatives (Shucksmith & Chapman, 1998; NESC, 1997; Popple & Shaw, 1997; Rennie, 1994). The challenge for rural community development is to find ways in which all these diverse groups can participate and share more equitably in the benefits of ongoing rural community development initiatives and thus make rural community development more inclusive (Furuseth, 1998).

Evaluation is defined as a systematic attempt to learn, with the intention of improving similar related actions in the future (Chelminsky & Shadish, 1997; Casley & Kumar, 1988). It has a key role to play in determining the effectiveness of rural development and rural community development initiatives in particular (Midmore, 1998; Shorthall & Shucksmith, 1998; Midmore, 1997; Stern, 1987). In particular, it is argued that the emergence of

participatory rural community development evaluation approaches within the context of overseas development initiatives has significant potential for wider adoption, particularly in the context of the ongoing concern in a European context for more inclusive approaches to rural community development.

The role of evaluation

Traditionally, rural community evaluations have taken the form of ethnographic and anthropological reviews of particular communities. For example: Ree's (1950) study of a Welsh rural community, Littlejohn's (1963) study of a Scottish community, and Williams' (1956) study of a small English rural community. These studies have provided interesting insights into the way different communities function and interact, but they tend toward the descriptive. They are, by their nature, fixed in time and as such have limited wider application. More recently with the increased availability of European, government and other sources of funding, there has been a growing awareness of the requirement for less descriptive and more analytical and investigative studies, or evaluations, of rural community development (Barr *et al.* 1996; Beaudoux, 1992; Berlage & Stokke, 1992; Buller & Wright, 1990; Casley & Kumar, 1987).

Undertaking some form of evaluation is often a requirement for the receipt of funding to carry out specific rural development projects. It is hardly surprising therefore that the majority of evaluations of rural community development to date have tended to focus on the issues of finance (Midmore, 1997; McCarthy *et al.* 1995; Knox & Hughes; 1994; Cuddy, 1991; Casley & Kumar, 1987; Feurstein, 1986; Commins, 1985). They tend to follow a particular form, assessing the extent to which project objectives have been achieved and addressing the issues of financial management and accountability. This kind of approach does not even begin to consider the less tangible and qualitative outcomes of the process, for example the building of local confidence and capacity which Murray and Dunn (1995) and Keane (1990) have noted are so critical to the whole process of local community development. There is therefore an increasing emphasis on the need to adopt a broader

approach to the evaluation of rural community development, approaches that evaluate all of the different aspects of rural community development including those that relate to the social dimension.

There is a need to identify evaluative approaches that enable the less tangible and longer term outcomes of the process of rural community development to be embraced. The proposals of Ray (1998) in the north of England and Inglis and Lussignea (1995) in Scotland provide examples of this type of approach. Other more radical approaches to the evaluation of rural community development include those that are emerging from the developing countries. These approaches focus on the central role of who is participating within the process of rural community development. They consider that participation should permeate all aspects of particular programmes' operation and delivery, from their design and implementation through to their evaluation (Rebien, 1996; Srinivansan, 1981). Participatory evaluation can be defined as evaluation which seeks to involve representatives of all the different stakeholder groups in the evaluation process (Fernandez *et al.* 1991). It is routinely applied in the developing country context in the evaluation of a whole variety of community development projects, from the provision of water and sanitation facilities by the World Bank (Narayan, 1993) to the evaluation of community health programmes (Rugh, 1992). A whole range of techniques and methodologies has been developed as part of this approach including: workshops, role playing, mapping exercises, ranking and scoring exercises, transects, timelines and the use of a variety of types of diagrams (Gosling, 1995).

The application of this type of participatory approach to evaluation is limited but growing within the European context. Examples of its use include the work of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, the work of Inglis and Lussignea (1995) in Scotland, Craig & Barahona (1996) in England, Kievelitz and Forester, (1994) in Austria, and Hurlimann and Jufer (1996) and Schmidt, (1996) in Switzerland. Many of these studies focus on urban areas, but for those that do focus on rural areas they tend to focus on particular aspects of rural development. The Inglis and Lussignea (1995) study for example, focuses on a forestry programme, rather than a rural community development programme. This study

will seek to address this gap through the development and subsequent application of a participatory evaluation approach to evaluate two specifically rural community development focused initiatives.

II THE RESEARCH

This research argues for the adoption of a more inclusive approach to rural community development (based on the recognition that rural communities are not homogeneous) which seeks to actively engage all groups, particularly the most marginalised in the process of development. This research uses evaluation to examine the potential of more participatory based approaches to engage with all the different groups within a particular community and in particular the more marginalised. The research involves the development of a participatory evaluation framework (drawing particularly on approaches used in overseas development) which seeks to engage the diversity of different groups within an area and particularly the more marginalised. The framework developed is then applied to, and examined in the context of two case studies - the Cavan/Monaghan LEADER Programme which involves two southern border[2] counties in Ireland; and Laggan, a small community in the central Highlands of Scotland. These particular case studies were selected as Cavan/Monaghan is a large-scale European funded rural community development programme, and Laggan is a small-scale self-generated initiative, and so they provide sites where the application of participatory approaches at different levels and in different social and political contexts can be examined. The implementation and the outcomes of the participatory evaluation framework in each case studies is reviewed to determine:

1) whether the application of participatory approaches enabled the greater involvement and participation of all the different interest groups in the case study;
2) whether and what effect the application of participatory approaches had on the particular rural community development initiative.

This analysis of the application of the participatory evaluation framework in the two case studies allows its potential, and the potential of participatory evaluation approaches in

general, to contribute to the development of a more inclusive approach to rural community development in a western European context to be determined.

The Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this thesis is that participatory evaluation can make a positive contribution to the processes and objectives of rural community development by focussing attention on the diversity of groups involved and particularly on the more marginalised groups who need to be more directly targeted by rural community development. This can also contribute to rural development in general given that a rural community development is both a key objective and a critical process within rural development in general.

Key questions to be addressed (derived from this hypothesis) within the research include:

- What constitutes the rural?
- Who constitutes the community?
- What is the nature and extent of the relationship between rural development and rural community development?
- What (if any) is the nature and extent of the contribution of participatory evaluation to rural community development? For example, does it enable/facilitate all the different groups within the community, particularly the most marginalised to become involved?
- What (if any) is the nature of the contribution of participatory evaluation to rural development in general? And finally, from a more methodological point of view, what (if any) is the potential of the participatory approach for rural community development evaluation?

III. THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

This study is divided into three parts. The first part examines the context and the principles of rural development, rural community development and the evaluation of rural community

[2] 'The border' marks the boundary between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

development from which a participatory evaluation framework is developed which aims to enhance and develop the role of evaluation within rural community development. The second part of this research focuses on the application of this evaluative approach in two case studies. The third part of this research involves an evaluation of the role and effectiveness of the evaluation framework in the light of the experience gained from its application within the two case studies. This section also contains an assessment of the potential of participatory approaches for rural community development in particular, and for rural development in general. The study concluded with a series of reflections on the validity of the research and its implications for both rural community development theory and rural development theory.

IV. CHAPTER OUTLINES

PART I. THE PRINCIPLES OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE EVALUATION OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1. The Rural Development Context, reviews the ideological, political and economic context within which rural development operates. This chapter also explores the relationship between rural development and rural community development, concluding that any analysis of rural community development must be undertaken within the overall context of rural development in general.

Chapter 2. Rural Community Development: Definitions and Review, reviews the existing literature on the theory and practice of rural community development. It examines various definitions and approaches to the concepts of community, community development and rural community development. It also explores the complexities associated with the processes involved in rural community development, highlighting the challenges they pose for rural community development evaluation.

Chapter 3. A Review of the Evaluation of Rural Community Development Processes is a review of the literature concerning the theory of evaluation and its application to rural community development. The different concepts and purposes of evaluation and rural community development evaluation are described and different evaluative approaches are classified into either the constructivist or the positivist paradigm. This chapter also identifies the various different methodologies that can be used within evaluation. The chapter concludes by identifying the potential that exists for the adoption of a participatory-based approach to the evaluation of rural community development.

Chapter 4. The Development of a Participatory Evaluation Framework (PEF) outlines the mechanisms by which the participatory evaluation framework was developed. It reviews existing evaluation practices and outlines the main findings of a series of interviews with evaluators. It uses the findings from this review and interviews to identify a series of good practices for the evaluation of rural community development. These good practices are subsequently used to develop the Participatory Evaluation Framework (PEF). This chapter concludes by outlining the different stages of the PEF in some detail.

PART II. THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION IN TWO CASE STUDIES

Chapter 5. The Application and Implementation of the PEF is divided into two parts in this chapter. The first part outlines the overall research strategy used to examine and test the PEF. It identifies action research (involving the direct participation of those previously designated as the subjects directly in the research process) as the most appropriate research strategy with which to test the PEF given that this type of participatory approach necessitates ongoing collaboration between the researcher and the researched. The chapter goes on to describe the two case studies selected and detail how the PEF was implemented in each.

Chapter 6. The Assessment of the Implementation of the PEF examines the various outcomes (including increased levels of participation, awareness, mutual understanding and trust, confidence, skills and practical actions) that resulted from the process of implementation of the PEF in both case studies, and includes consideration of both the tangible and the less tangible outcomes. The chapter concludes with a review of the overall nature and extent of the outcomes that resulted from the process of implementation of the PEF.

Chapter 7. The Results of the PEF examines the results (in terms of the findings and recommendations) which followed from the application and completion of the formal process of implementation of the PEF in each case study.

PART III. AN EVALUATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION APPROACH

Chapter 8. A Review of the Effect of the PEF is divided into two main parts. This chapter details the findings of a review (conducted approximately 4-6 months after the completion) of the original evaluation in each case study. The first part identifies the mechanisms by which this review of the PEF was undertaken in each case study. The methodologies and processes used to review the PEF are outlined in some detail. The second part of the chapter details the findings of the review . The chapter concludes with a critique of the overall effect of the PEF and the role of the evaluator.

Chapter 9. An Evaluation of the PEF evaluates the role of the PEF with evidence drawn from its application in the two case studies. The criteria used to evaluate the PEF are identified with reference to key rural community development processes. Criteria used within this examination include the extent to which the PEF was participatory, the extent to which it contributed to ongoing rural community development, its trustworthiness, and its transferability. Each case study is examined in some detail in relation to each of these criteria. The chapter concludes with an examination of the strengths and limitations of the

PEF, a review of the potential of the PEF and an examination of the potential of participatory evaluation for rural community development.

Chapter 10. Conclusions on the Research

The first part of this chapter reflects on the research methodology used within the study. The second part of the chapter reflects on the wider implications of the research findings both for rural community development theory and for rural development theory. The chapter concludes with the identification of key areas for future research.

CHAPTER 1. THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Development as a concept is essentially contested. The clear identification of the particular ideological concept of development, rural development and rural community development adopted within this study, is therefore a critical element in the identification of an appropriate evaluative approach (Phillips, 1998; Van Ufford, 1993). Additionally, rural community development does not occur in isolation and must therefore be considered, understood and indeed evaluated within the wider context of development in general and rural development in particular (Bryden *et al.* 1997)

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and review the key development concepts, approaches and theories associated with rural development that provide the context for rural community development. The first part of this chapter examines what it is that constitutes the rural and what it is that constitutes development and the factors that cause uneven development, while the second part examines the theories associated with rural development. The purpose of this review is to enable a better understanding of the nature and extent of the complexities associated with rural development and the various ideological, political and economic contexts within which it operates. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the relationship between rural development and rural community development. The purpose of this exploration is to determine the nature of the relationship between rural community development and rural development. Chapter 2 examines the rural of rural community development in detail.

1.2. A DISCUSSION OF THE TERM 'RURAL'

'There is a general tendency to discuss "the rural" in a taken for granted manner and it is not until one attempts to define what exactly is meant by the term, that its complexities become apparent'

(Falk & Pinhey, 1978, p.547).

A clear and unambiguous definition of 'the rural' has been in dispute for many years. It is defined in different ways for different purposes and means different thing to different people in different situations (Jones, 1995; Bryden, 1994; Cloke, 1985; Gilbert, 1982). Traditionally the term 'rural' has been equated with particular spaces and functions, particularly agriculture, recognised by extensive land uses, primary industries, the preponderance of small settlements and what was considered a distinct way of life which evolved from a close association with the land (Von Meyer & Mannion, 1993; Hoggart, 1990). The advent of the agricultural revolution and the restructuring of the rural economy in general and agriculture in particular has meant that traditional practices are no longer fixed and thus the spatial/functional definition of the rural is now rather restrictive (Ilbery, 1998; Kearney *et al.* 1997).

Definitions of the 'rural' have also have been associated with remote areas with low population densities (Halfacree, 1993; Hoggart, 1990). In Scotland local authority districts were referred to as 'rural' if they had a population density of less than one person per hectare in 1981 (Bryden, 1994; Randall, 1985). This type of definition while it focuses attention on areas which Bryden (1994) terms 'deep rural areas', excludes other less remote areas and is therefore not a particularly useful definition.

The 'rural' is sometimes defined in relation to the 'urban', i.e.: the rural is what is not urban (Saraceno, 1993). Kearney *et al.* (1997, p.5) adopted this definition in their recent Mid Term Review of the LEADER II Programme where they define rural Ireland as 'all locations beyond the immediate environs of the five largest urban centres'. This type of definition suggests that the 'rural' is residual rather than 'sharply focused' (Cloke, 1985, p. 4). It does not reflect the characteristics of rural areas themselves or offer any explanation for the existence of differing opinions and perceptions among those people who (for various reasons) choose to live there (Cloke, 1985). The inability of these largely descriptive definitions to account for the complexities of meaning associated with the 'rural' can be seen to stem from their preoccupation with defining it as an objective category or physical entity (Halfacree, 1993).

Other more academic approaches to the definition of the rural include the application of uni-variate and multi-variate analysis techniques (Cloke & Edwards, 1985; Cloke, 1977). There is also the concept of a rural-urban continuum (Redfield, 1941), an idea that survived well into the 1970s. The main difficulty with this concept is that it does not accord with the empirical evidence of studies which identified supposedly 'rural' societies in 'urban' localities and vice versa (Shucksmith, 1994, Newby, 1986; Pahl, 1966). The 1980s marked an increased interest in the role of society and space with a more detailed consideration of the ideas of landscape, locality and the spatiality of nature. The late 1980s, however, was marked by a move away from a search for the causes of rural change with subsequent suggestion that the rural be done away due to its lack of explanatory powers (Cloke & Little, 1997; Halfacree, 1993; Pratt 1991; Hoggart & Buller, 1987; Young & Wilmott, 1957; Pahl, 1965). Hoggart (1990, p.245) for example, referred to the category of rural as being 'obfuscatory and often atheoretical'. It was only then that there was any serious recognition of the need for the adoption of a more humanistic approach to the definition of the rural (Mormont, 1990; Harper 1987). The subsequent recognition of the concept of 'rural' as a social representation offered a better explanation as to why and how perceptions of the 'rural' can evolve, differ so widely and yet coexist, grounded as they are in the reality of people's everyday life experiences (Jones 1995; Halfacree, 1993).

The concept of rural as a social representation is based on the notion that the rural means different things to different people (Pratt, 1996; Shucksmith, 1994; Halfacree, 1993). Mormont (1990) describes this concept of the rural as a form of symbolic shorthand, which seeks to captures, how individuals feel about the rural. The significance of this definition of the rural (for this research in particular) is that it places increased emphasis on the range of accounts of all those various people who live in an area (Jones, 1995; Halfacree, 1993). It is indeed this concept of rural as a social representation, within which the multiplicity of perceptions of the rural can be accommodated which informs this research. This interpretation of the rural also reasserts the legitimacy of local knowledge in relation to purely academic constructions of knowledge (Pratt, 1996; Jones, 1995; Halfacree, 1993). The fact that people have strong feelings about what it is that constitutes the rural can also be seen to have consequences for power and action (Shucksmith, 1994). Within this

conception of the rural the symbolic can be seen to take precedence over the material/physical, which in turn makes the definition of what it is that constitutes the rural something which is contested (Pratt, 1996; Shucksmith, 1994; Halfacree, 1993).

The adoption of an interpretative definition of 'rural' as a social construction also moves towards the incorporation of the 'vitality and incoherent unruliness' of local people's accounts of their lives (Jones, 1995). An important element of this is the recognition of 'the rural' as a signifier rather than a physical entity, a category that each society takes and reconstructs (Mormont, 1990). What is important is less who is 'rural' but how different people feel 'rural' and what their feelings reveal about social and power relationships (Mormont, 1990; Mormont, 1987). This concept of rural attaches a new importance to the realities of everyday life which determine an individual's views, shifting the emphasis from a quest for numeric and seemingly objective categorisation towards a kaleidoscope of different texts (Cloke & Little, 1997; Halfacree, 1993; Mormont, 1990).

In this context the analysis of discourses i.e. the ways in which people communicate, is regarded by some to be critical to the development of a better understanding of the rural (Burnett, 1998; Gregory 1994). Jones (1995) in his work identifies at least four different discourses that include popular, professional, lay and academic discourses. He also gives some consideration to the question of control and power in relation to how particular discourses are constructed, negotiated, controlled and prioritised. The study of the ways in which individuals and groups construct the rural can indeed be seen to provide valuable insights into social differences and their influences on power and the formulation of policy within rural areas (Pratt, 1996).

More important for the purposes of this research (than the analysis of the different discourses of the rural and their construction) is the identification of the issues associated with the existence of a range of different, often conflicting views of the rural and by association what it is that constitutes rural development (Burnett, 1998). This raises two central issues for this study. The first issue relates to 'inclusiveness and representativeness' i.e. whether the study engages and represents all the various different groups within the case study area. The second issue (which relates to the

notion of power and its manipulation within rural areas) is 'equity', i.e. whether the research accurately and equitably represents the views of all the different groups but particularly the less powerful and more marginalised within the study. These are two critical questions that will be referred to throughout this study.

1.3. A DISCUSSION OF THE TERM DEVELOPMENT

Development is a contested concept given that it is variously conceived as a goal, a process and a perceived objective (McCarthy *et al.* 1995; Morris & Copestake, 1993; Marsden & Oakley, 1990; Mabogunje, 1980; Long, 1977). An exact definition of what it is that constitutes development is difficult, given that any definition would appear to depend on who it is that defines it, for what purpose and at what point in time (Buller & Wright, 1990). Kearney *et al*, (1994) for example define development simply in terms of a multidimensional process leading to change, while Buller & Wright (1990, p.2) offer a more complex definition. They define development as 'an ongoing and essentially interventionist process of qualitative, quantitative and/or distributional changes leading to some degree of betterment for groups of people'. This definition raises the question of who it is that defines betterment, since a definition of betterment must be seen to be dependent on a particular individual's personal and ideological standpoint (Buller & Wright, 1990). What it is that constitutes development is therefore clearly a value-laden issue (Pearce & Turner, 1990).

Up until the early 1980s, development was largely defined in terms of a body of knowledge that accounted for national and international spatial variation in patterns of development processes of capital accumulation and economic re-structuring (Gamble & Weil, 1997; Hobart, 1993; Howland, 1993; Nelson, 1993; Gilbert, 1992; Marsden & Oakley, 1990; Mabogunje, 1980). There are a whole variety of theories to explain this type of development. For example, the economic growth/modernisation theory which was common in the 1950s and 1960s viewed development as a series of successive stages through which most countries must pass as they moved from a traditional to a more modern society and that if the right quantities of savings investment and foreign aid were available this then would lead to growth (Hobart, 1993; Nelson, 1993; Beaudoux, 1992; Mabogunje, 1980). The neo-classical structural model replaced this in turn. Neo-classical theory is predicated on the belief that the market is ultimately

self-correcting in the longer term (Howland, 1993). This model uses theory and statistics to describe the process of change and development (Gilbert, 1992). More recently however it is the international dependency paradigm which views underdevelopment in terms of international and domestic power relationships, which has gained favour (Padaki, 1995). None of these theories however moves beyond the traditional concept of development as associated with economic growth and outputs and structural change, neither do they consider the issues of inclusiveness or equity (Nelson & Wright, 1995; Quevit, 1994).

Major technological and social changes in the 1980s marked a shift in how development was perceived (Van der Ploeg & Long, 1994; Howland, 1993; Unwin, 1983). These changes were the result of a combination of factors including: the growth of both the environmental movement; (the launch in 1980 of the World Conservation Strategy) the women's movement; a concern for overpopulation and a growing criticism of major development models (Booth, 1994; Berlage & Stokke, 1992; Vazquez-Bargyero, 1992; Bennett, 1989). It was the combination of all the different interests that sought to ensure clear connections were made between: 1) local and global issues, 2) socio economic and political factors and 3) quality of life issues. This in turn resulted in the development of linkages between economic growth and development and recognition of the environmental and social costs associated with unchecked economic growth. It also involved a wider recognition of the interdependent and finite nature of the resources on which economic development is based (Vazquez-Bargyero, 1992; Pearce & Turner, 1990; Pearce *et al.* 1989).

Concepts of development have since expanded from market-driven and technology-driven growth processes towards more integrated approaches (Booth, 1994; Hobart, 1993; Van der Ploeg, 1993). These approaches included both environmental and social considerations and notions of self-change, self-determination, equity and sustainability, make a clear connection and link between economic growth, social sustainability, environmental sustainability and equity (Dower, 1988; Unwin, 1983). Frazer (1991) outlined some key features of the 'ideal' integrated development approach (from a community work perspective) as follows: area-based; multifaceted and multi-sectoral development; planned; involving natural resource development and

'bottom up' participative development. This particular concept of area-based integrated development is not new. Economic and social regeneration through self-help had long been an important development approach in certain areas (Keane, 1990; Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986). The recent revival of interest in integrated and in particular area based approaches can be seen to stem from a recognition that the benefits of economic growth have not been/are not evenly spread, together with a growing recognition that top down sectoral approaches alone, only serve to increase disparities between and within areas with the increasing marginalisation of certain groups within society (LRDP, 1999; NESC, 1997; Nelson & Wright 1995; Saraceno, 1994). Locally-based and integrated approaches to development are therefore being increasingly applied, in parallel with other more sectorally based development approaches at regional and national and supra-national level (Quevit, 1994). These locally based and integrated approaches are particularly important in the context of this research in that they provide a mechanism through which the issues of inclusiveness and equity can be addressed.

1.3.1. The concept of sustainable development

Sustainable development has been variously conceptualised and defined by, Parker and Selman (1997), Bryden (1994) Pearce *et al.* (1989) Lockeritze (1988), Redclift, (1987) and Wagstaff (1985). At its simplest the concept of sustainable development emerged from an attempt to translate the concept of sustainability into a practical development strategy that could be used to support the adoption of longer-term development approaches. The concept of sustainability is not new and was originally bound up in and with the concept of husbandry, continuity, durability, interdependence and the exploitation of natural resources over a long period (Bryden, 1994). The modern concept of sustainability incorporates all these different elements but also incorporates the ethical and moral dimension of obligations of the present generation towards future generations.

Amongst one of the best known definitions of sustainable development is that of the Bruntland Report which defines it as 'development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their

own needs' (WECD, 1987, p.8). These are noble sentiments, but not ones against which the sustainability of a particular action could be determined. There are however other more comprehensive definitions of sustainable development. Gertler & Baker (1990) define sustainable development in terms of development which results in an increase in the standard of living of all through the better provision of resources; enhances the self-esteem of individuals by ensuring that all have an equal opportunity to participate in the development process, and expands the variety of economic and social choices available to individuals. This definition is useful in that it begins to capture the core meanings of sustainable development. This definition make the connection between the global and the local; focusing on both the physical environment and human populations; imposing a long term view on the consequences of present day activity; serving the goals of gender equity and generally seeking to integrate social and economic development (Gamble & Weil, 1997).

This approach, which highlights the importance of inter-generational equity, geographical equity, participation, social justice and integrated action, has become an important unifying concept which recognises unchecked economic growth is simply not sustainable in the longer term (Haughton, 1998). In practical terms this translates into a concern with not only income and jobs but also with other social, cultural and environmental goals such as adequate housing and social facilities together with a high quality environment (Stern, 1989). It is therefore, this concept of equitable and inclusive development that informs the development approach used both explicitly and implicitly throughout this research. As such, the participatory evaluation framework subsequently developed in the later chapters of this research is based on this concept of sustainable development.

1.3.2. An Outline of the Motors of Development

Development does not 'take place in a vacuum', but is influenced by a whole range of social, economic and political factors and processes at a range of different levels (Gilg, 1998). At a macro level some of the most powerful factors influencing development have been identified as the market and the market place, production, trade, labour, finance and capital flows, markets in services and communications (Featherstone, 1990; Robertson, 1990; Webster, 1990).

Globalisation in the context of one of the key motors of development refers to both the synthesis of the historical processes (e.g. market, production, finance and communications) affecting the world, and the conceptual framework interpreting these changes (Archidugi & Michie, 1997). The conceptual framework is based on the idea of the earth as a single space, as a result of increased interconnectedness as well as an increased awareness of this interconnectedness. The traditional frame of reference in earlier discussions of world development has always been the nation state. However, in the context of globalisation, a concentration on the nation state has been accused of being reductionist (Craig, 1998; Marsden *et al.* 1990). The nation state is argued to represent a limited horizon, in an era of global focus. Equally, a reduction of globalisation to the idea of simply homogenisation has also proved inadequate, though there is a possibility that globalisation includes elements of homogenisation. Globalisation is perhaps best understood as a framework of differentiation, the variable of which is the scope and depth of consciousness of the world as a single space (Nelson, 1993; Archidugi & Michie, 1997).

The globalisation of the market involves the recognition that most markets are now worldwide, few being contained singularly within the nation state or a small group of states. These markets are instead open to all economic entities (Craig, 1998). The globalisation of production in contrast, relates to the fact that various different components of production can now be located in various places to take advantage of various resources. This in turn has provided a mechanism through which trans-national corporations can maximise the advantage of their size and scope, which in turn has meant that production is substantially more mobile that it would have been in the past (Bingham & Meir, 1993).

The globalisation of finance concerns a wholly integrated international finance market, through the de-regulation of stock market as well as the lessening and sometimes abolition of exchange controls. There is now a continuous and real-time flow of monetary information, facilitated by advanced information technologies, which has resulted in an exponential increase in the volume and velocity of international transactions (NESC, 1997). The globalisation of communications is widely accepted

as a crucial part of globalisation as a whole, with networks of communications spanning the globe. The characteristics of post-modernity, increasing globalisation of capital, and 'free' market economies, technological advances and the effect these have had on production processes and relations have resulted in fragmentation, change and uncertainty resulting in increasing polarisation between and within both nations and regions (Lipsey & Crystal, 1995). Popple & Shaw (1997, p.191) view 'exclusion as the outcome of global economic processes which privilege the customer over the citizen'.

In tandem with, and perhaps in reaction to, the process(es) of globalisation has been the development of the apparently polar process of 'localisation'. These are in fact two sides of the same coin. Just as globalisation involves emphasis on global complexity and density, so localisation includes an increase in local complexity and density (Robertson, 1992). Archidugi and Michie, (1997) and indeed others argue that it is this increased consciousness of the world, so vital to the ideology of globalisation, that leads to an increased awareness of the local. Featherstone, (1990) has extended this concept further by arguing that global processes indeed have an autonomy all of their own, and therefore cannot be reduced to simply the outcome of inter-state processes, but rather operate independently of these. Robertson (1990) indeed argues that in order to identify globalisation the relationships between national societies, individual selves, and international systems of societies and mankind (in the generic sense) must be examined.

1.3.3. Factors causing uneven development, marginalisation and exclusion

If the phenomenon of development is seen as structural, then uneven development or spatial variations in patterns of development can largely be seen to derive from inequality in economic and social opportunity (Furuseth, 1998). Thus development can be seen in terms of processes of capital accumulation and economic and social restructuring at a national and international scale (Kulkarni & Rajan, 1991). Different areas and different groups have different economic and social resources and are differentially tied into the regional and the international economy as well as to the more traditional forms of national regulation. It is also the case that the benefits of

economic growth do not trickle down evenly. Development is therefore not evenly or equally distributed over space, with some areas and groups benefiting from development while others find themselves severely disadvantaged (Selsky, 1991).

The current re-structuring 'globalisation' process has created a new and dynamic set of sectoral, social, political and technological conditions which in turn have exacerbated the differences between resource rich areas capable of adapting to these changes and areas which are lagging behind, particularly those on the periphery of the capitalist economy. The inability of some areas and groups to adapt to such changes are often linked to basic structural weaknesses in their economies linked to their underdevelopment or to the problems of rural/urban decline (VanRees, 1991). Examples of basic structural weaknesses might include: poor access to markets; poor access to political processes and decision makers; social and spatial inequalities; a reliance on the trickle down effect; an over dependence on inward investment which has become increasingly transitory/unstable as a result of the globalisation of world markets. These factors together with intensive social restructuring caused by the shift from production orientated economics towards a more capital orientated economics and combined with the inability of certain communities/areas to take advantage of internal and external opportunities, have led to the increasing marginalisation of particular groups and particular areas (NESC, 1997; Van der Ploeg & Long, 1994; Wright, 1990).

The advent and re-structuring of global markets (the internalisation of the world economy), the substitution of capital for labour, the growth of the service sector and the decline of the manufacturing industry can in addition be seen to have provided little benefit for those groups in society with particular problems such as the young or the long term unemployed. The creation of larger global markets has led to substantial rationalisation, causing significant economic decline within certain sectors and the increasing social polarisation and exclusion of certain groups from an increasingly globalised economies. Areas and groups can therefore be increasingly seen to be divided into two categories, those which are, and which have the capabilities to participate in an increasingly globalised economy and those who do not (Martin, 1995). Tackling social exclusion and combating poverty are now central concerns of

organisations like the European Union, as reflected in the high priority accorded to these issues in the Maastricht Treaty and in the objectives of the Structural Funds (Shucksmith & Chapman, 1998).

1.4 A DISCUSSION OF THE TERM RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development, (similarly to development in general), can be variously conceived as a both a process and a goal. In the past, rural development was seen as synonymous with agricultural development (Lockeritze, 1988) and increased production, with rural and agricultural marginalisation defined around productivist and efficiency criteria, tied into a highly regulated and state supported sector (Kearney *et al*, 1994; Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986). The recent and ongoing re-structuring of the global economy can, however, be seen to have had a profound effect on rural areas in general and on agriculture in particular and in turn on perceptions of what it is that is seen to constitute rural development (Von Meyer & Mannion, 1993). Other influences on the development of a broader conception of rural development include the European Commission publication on the 'Future of Rural Society' and the OECD (1990) report on 'Partnerships for Rural Development' (Kearney, 1997; OECD, 1990; European Commission, 1988).

In agriculturally dependent areas, re-structuring which involved increases in mechanisation, increases in intensity of farming practices and land consolidation have weakened social relations and reduced the viability of rural service centres (Ray, 1997a; Lockeritze, 1988). In addition, the majority of rural land (because of its agricultural occupancy) is now tied into distant agricultural markets, increasingly dominated by powerful interest groups (often trans-national corporations) (Halfacree, 1993). Additionally, the range and nature of policy measures and supports available or not available nationally and at a European level can be seen to have direct impact on the development of these areas (Midmore, 1998). In other industrial and resource based rural areas, job losses relating to restructuring processes and tightened environmental controls have exacerbated the long-standing problems of intermittent employment and out-migration (Saraceno, 1994).

In some rural areas, however, there has been a re-location of economic activity and people from urban areas (Ilbery, 1998; Henderson & Francis, 1994). This process has created new demands for services within rural areas thereby re-defining the relationship between the urban and the rural, also re-confirming the rural as an essential part of regional change and development. This movement of people has created new jobs in the social economy sector, largely in the area of local services, such as childcare, help for older people, leisure and culture facilities, housing renovation, local transport and environmental improvements (PLANET, 1997). These jobs have, in turn, contributed to the radical re-structuring of the rural economy away from agricultural development, towards a more integrated form of development which combines different sectors in new ways (Padaki, 1995; Howland, 1993).

The conservative political climate that has emerged in western nations and the implementation of libertarian policy directives has also impacted on the provision of services and infrastructure within rural areas (Ilbery, 1998; Shucksmith & Chapman, 1998). In fact, rural areas and communities increasingly find themselves competing against one another and against more vocal urban areas. This scramble for limited public resources is also accompanied by a competition for mobile private capital. The outcome of this competition is that uneven development between places and regions is increased with poorer rural areas increasingly marginalised by wealthier, stronger, more resource rich areas. This widens the disparities between rural areas (NESC, 1997). Agricultural development alone, clearly cannot solve the variety of problems facing rural areas, neither can it fully explain the occurrence of increasing differentiation within rural areas and a widening disparity between areas (Kearney *et al*, 1994; Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986).

The range and breath of problems facing rural areas requires a new approach to rural development. A meaningful construction of rural development as a development process therefore now involves a variety of development processes at a range of levels in a process of change, leading to some degree of betterment for people (Sjoholt, 1985). This process also needs to be cumulative in that it must bring not just an improvement in physical and social conditions but also gains in peoples' abilities to control and sustain these conditions. Mannion (1996, p.2) defines this approach to

rural development in terms of 'the promotion of social and commercial enterprise in rural areas, the aim of which is to stimulate individuals and the community into self-sustaining endeavour'. This concept of a multi-dimensional approach to rural development incorporating notions of inclusiveness, representativeness and equity marks a significant advance in development thinking.

In the same way, rural development as a goal must involve **equitable** provision (with employment and income generation opportunities) for the maximum number of people, together with the provision of the minimum of goods and services necessary to sustain the continuation of a viable community and social life in an area (NESC, 1994). The exact nature of the rural development that takes place within a particular area will of course depend on local circumstance, the availability of local resources (both physical and social) and the nature, extent and depth of external linkages. Given that rural development seeks to tackle inequalities, a critical element in the success of the approach is the identification of who has been marginalised and of what constitutes the common interest/good. A crucial element in the long-term success of the approach is therefore the engagement and participation of those most directly affected in the development processes (Chambers *et al.* 1992). Without this central objective there is a danger that rural development could simply act to reinforce existing levels of inequalities. In addition, improvements in one group can also be seen to directly or indirectly hinder similar improvements in another, thereby exacerbating stratification (LRDP, 1999; Furuseth, 1998). Additionally the most marginalised within a particular society or area by their nature are both difficult to identify and target, and so a considerable amount of effort and time may be involved in facilitating their organisation prior to implementing a programme of rural development (Booth, 1994).

Uneven social development stems from the theory of uneven economic development that is based on recognition of inequality in economic and social opportunity (Phillips, 1998; Crow & Allan, 1994; Newby, 1994). Global restructuring has accelerated the patterns of uneven development between rural and urban areas and indeed within rural areas with increasing differentiation between rural areas (VanRees, 1991). It is also the case that many rural problems can be seen to derive from the way in which decisions are made (Wright, 1992). The trend towards a divided society between the

'haves' and the 'have nots', the included and excluded has as a consequence gathered momentum (LRDP, 1999).

This notion of a dynamic multidimensional, inclusive and equitable rural development approach, concerned with structural changes and consequent adjustments in technological, economic and social conditions informs this research (Wright, 1992; Newby, 1984). Its purpose is to promote and support the development of viable and equitable rural societies through equitable improvements in the economic and social well-being of rural residents, brought about by economic and social enterprise (Von Meyer & Mannion, 1993). It is a complex multi-sectoral process, which involves demographics, economics and social and environmental development, and which is concerned with both differences in living conditions and development perspectives (Pratt, 1989). Critical questions within this approach and within this research therefore relate to how particularly marginalised groups and individuals can be encouraged and facilitated in an equitable way to participate in the development process (PLANET, 1997).

1.5 THEORIES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Theories of rural development seek explanations for the changes that take place in rural areas and economies. These theories have changed and developed substantially over the years in parallel with rural change (Phillips, 1998). In the late 1950s for example they were concerned largely with agricultural production and development while in the 1960s these theories were replaced with a concern for counter-urbanisation (Harper, 1989; Thorns, 1968). The emphasis changed again in the 1970s and 1980s with a growing interest in resource conflicts and their 'management', people's access or lack of access to services. Another focus was the rural community and the changes affecting this community. The difficulty with these approaches was that they were conceived within a logical positivist paradigm and were as such fundamentally concerned with quantification rather than explanation (Jones, 1995; Halfacree, 1993). All of these approaches can indeed be seen to suffer from what Philo (1992, p.3) termed 'a restrictive social imagination' in that they did not consider the intangible aspects and factors involved in these changes. Neither did they consider

the political nature of rural change. The 1980s and 1990s in contrast, marked the wider recognition (in line with developments in wider social science) of the political aspects and overtones of rural change, through the incorporation of some Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas and the identification of the importance of the immateriality of rurality (Ilbery, 1998; Phillips, 1998).

Theories of rural development conceived in the Marxist tradition were largely tied into the economics of production, land use and growth, with rural areas regarded as marginal places, backwaters to progressive industrialisation (Ilbery, 1998). Rural areas (in contrast to cities) were seen as small, undiversified with a largely low skilled labour force (Howland, 1993). Particular theories that developed in this tradition included central place, product cycle, cumulative causation and demand and supply side models. Central place theory was based on the idea of the existence of a hierarchy of settlements, thereby providing a framework for understanding the pattern and trend of places, with towns seen as service centres for agricultural based economies, with losses of services in lower hierarchy places leading to increases in larger (urban) centres (Evans, 1985). Product cycle theory in contrast was based on an understanding of the small and non-diversified nature of rural places, which imply fragility and a potential absence in larger urban centres. The loss of a single industry within a rural area for example could devastate a rural economy while the opening of a single factory could in some instances nearly eliminate local unemployment (Howland, 1993).

The perceived absence of significant rural economic diversity and therefore the ability to 'self-correct' was however seen to render neo-classical 'laissez faire' growth theory largely irrelevant to the majority of rural areas (Bingham & Mier, 1993). The circular and cumulative causation theory in contrast, was seen to provide a guide to growth patterns in rural economies, viewing rural economies as self-perpetuating rather than self-correcting (Phillips, 1998). Meanwhile, demand side theory was based on the argument that regional development depended on external demands for goods produced in a region, with supply side theory attributing increases in local outputs to increases in local productive inputs including capital, labour and external economies (Nelson, 1993). The main limitation of these theories was that none of them could adequately explain the existence and growth of disparities between rural areas and the

people who inhabit them. These approaches were also based on the assumption that economic growth benefits all rural residents equally and that all have equal status. The ongoing re-structuring of agriculture and the globalisation of the world economy has also meant that rural areas are increasingly tied into both national and international processes of change thereby reducing the importance of the previously dominant productivist ethos, further limiting the usefulness of the theories developed within this framework (Von Meyer & Mannion, 1993). Clout (1993) indeed argues that rural areas are now important elements of international economic arenas and among the leading investment frontiers which are increasingly being seen as areas of consumption as well as production (Ilbery, 1998). The accommodation of greater pressure for amenity and the environment within a broader concept of rural areas as spaces of consumption can also be seen to have fostered new theories of rural development (Marsden, 1998; Phillips, 1998).

What has evolved has been a political economy approach based on an understanding of agriculture as a subset of the international food system with rural development as an adjunct to these processes (Marsden *et al*, 1996; Goodman & Watts, 1994). Political economy theory recognises that growth is not evenly distributed and seeks to explain uneven development through consideration of the range of other internal and external social, economic and political factors and interests affecting the rural economy and rural areas. The approach theorises change in terms of the outcomes of relations, structures and agents of political economy. It introduces a class dimension to the consideration of rural development and explores the changing role of property relations and occupation within this process. The relationship between consumption and commodification is also a critical element of the political economy approach given the belief that rural areas are increasingly spaces of consumption as opposed to spaces of production (Flynn & Marsden, 1995).

A further evolution conceived within the political economy paradigm has been the emergence of the restructuring approach that seeks to integrate the changing relations of property and occupation with those of consumption and commodification (Marsden, 1995). This re-structuring involves the transfer of power from the realm of production (the property owning, agricultural groups) to that of consumption (the more mobile

capital rich groups). This places increased emphasis on the ways in which particular groups construct rural development and on how they act to achieve this (Jones, 1995). A further refinement of this approach has been the emergence of regulationist theory. This theory seeks to understand the links between the political economy of rural change, social representation, political strategy and social conflict (Marsden & Wrigley, 1996). It is closely linked to restructuring theory except for the increased emphasis that it places on the ways in which people and social agencies and factors direct change. In contrast re-structuring theory tends to emphasise structures. While class analysis which is closely linked to the two previous approaches, class groupings can be seen as part of both the outcomes of economic re-structuring and as an element in the process of re-structuring (Phillips, 1998).

The previous three approaches and in particular the understandings on which they are based are important, in that they make a vital and dynamic connection between rural change and economic transformation. Phillips & Williams, (1984, p.38) suggest, based on these theories, that 'contemporary rural change is linked to a shift from a manufacturing-centred economy to a more service-centred economy in which capitalist-working class relations based on ownership of capital and labour are overlain by social relations based on such things as skills and qualifications, consumption decisions and political power created through corporations and state bureaucracies'. The new social relationships create new sources of social power and the emergence of a new social class able and keen to use their power (Midgely *et al*, 1996). This approach based on 'class analysis' has come in for some criticism (Miller, 1996; Hoggart *et al*. 1995; Murdock & Marsden, 1994). One issue relates to whether the service class is indeed a class in its own right or simply a class fraction; the second relates to the lack of a firm conceptual foundation for the notion that this class has a particularly strong attachment to rural areas.

What is clear from this review of the different social and political economy theories of rural development, is that economic changes within rural areas tend to be related to broad social changes particularly those associated within the movement of particular groups of people into and out of rural areas (Lowe *et al*. 1993). This has led to recognition of the importance of power relationships and particularly new power

relationships and 'actor networks' which are likely to be dominated by external rather that internal linkages (Munton, 1995). Social economy theories develop these ideas further through seeking to integrate the factors of dynamic rural change into the process of rural development, grounding the multiplicity of economic relations in their social and geographical setting (Phillips, 1998). Key elements of this process include consideration of the role of regulation and deregulation; arenas of commoditisation and social resistance; networks and actor spaces and the relationships between these different elements (Ilbery, 1998; Marsden, 1998; Phillips, 1998).

The adoption of this type of social and political economy approach to rural development theory is useful in that it enables consideration of both the patterns of uneven rural development and the ways in which combinations of market, public and community interests and networks carry forward the process of development (Marsden, 1998). This type of approach also highlights the importance of multi-sectoral and participative approaches to rural development, which seek to bring about economic and social regeneration, in the context of wider social and economic change (Midmore, 1997). The extent to which rural development can create 'room for manoeuvre' at a local level can be seen to depend on the nature and extent of internal and external economic, social and political factors affecting a particular area (Bryden, 1997).

1.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Rural community development is based on the principles of self-help and inclusion and is characterised by the principles of multi-dimensionality, partnership and participation (McLaughlin, 1987). Rural community development is about social change (human capital development) at a local level, and the ways in which communities or groups within rural areas act, and the strategies they adopt to overcome disadvantage and change (Wright, 1992). It also focuses on the mechanisms and the processes that affect the survival and betterment of the people who inhabit rural areas. The concept of rural development in contrast, operates at all levels to embrace the totality of factors affecting rural areas and the rural economy in general. Its desired end state will

include income, employment and other social, cultural and environmental goals such as adequate housing and social facilities and various other forms of cultural expression (Stern, 1989). The NESC (1994) report on rural development recognises the main elements of rural development as: pre-development (animation); the reduction of social exclusion and enterprise development, in order to provide the maximum number of people with access to employment and income, minimum public goods provision and a viable community and social life. Rural community development therefore comprises a substantial element of rural development since it is both a key part of the process of rural development and one of the objectives of rural development. A high profile report produced by the President's Council on Rural America in 1992 quoted by Murray & Greer (1995, p.96) comments as follows: 'Rural development is and must be fundamentally, development of the whole community, and not merely its business sector'. Rural community development is distinct from community-led rural development in that it focuses initially (at least) on the social development of a particular community, whereas community-led rural development can focus on either social or economic development or indeed both.

Rural community development alone is clearly not the panacea for rural problems, since it cannot overcome the structural causes of disadvantage. It is instead one of the key elements in the process of rural development and one of the key objectives of rural development. Other critical elements in the process of rural development include the design at a regional and national level of fiscal, education and social policies which tackle disadvantage and which create the necessary conditions in which locally based rural community development can be encouraged and supported. This would facilitate action at all levels to address the substantial problems and inequalities that exist in rural areas and between and within rural communities in particular. What rural community development does do is focus attention on the potential for growth in local areas and on the need to ensure participation by all sectors of the community in local decision making in particular (NESC, 1997).

Chapter 2 goes on to examine and focus on the nature and the practice of rural community development in more depth. It specifically examines the various definitions and concepts of community, community development and the nature of the relationship

between community development and rural community development. This chapter also details the role and purpose of rural community development and outlines various different approaches to rural community development. Key elements in the process of rural community development are also detailed, while the chapter concludes with an examination of the effectiveness of rural community development as a development approach.

CHAPTER 2. RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - DEFINITIONS AND REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies and reviews the key concepts, theories and approaches associated with rural community development. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a better understanding of the nature and extent of the complexities and processes involved in rural community development. The first part of the chapter, Sections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 examine the concepts of 'community' and 'community development' and the nature of the relationship between community development and 'rural community development' respectively. Section 2.5 outlines the role and purpose of rural community development. Sections 2.6 and 2.7 detail the different approaches to rural community development and review some of the key elements involved in the process of rural community development. Section 2.8 concludes with an examination of the effectiveness of rural community development as a development approach.

2.2. A DISCUSSION OF THE TERM 'COMMUNITY'

The concept of 'community' has an enduring appeal and is imbued with positive connotations 'a totem of how we would like our lives to be, as opposed to the less than perfect reality' (Neuby, 1994 p.xi). It is applied in a range of situations from the notion of a small relatively isolated physical/social 'community', through religious and academic 'communities' of interest, to its use in the context of the European 'Community' (Bryden, 1994). Despite or perhaps because of its wide application, community is a difficult concept to define.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines community as ' a body of people living in one place or district or country and considered as a whole; a group with common interests or origins'. The concept of community is however much more than collections of individuals sharing some common space (Chambers & McBeth, 1992; Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986). It means

different things to different people in different contexts and can therefore be seen to be both socially constructed and negotiated. For example respondents in a study of lifestyles in rural Wales associated it with 'sharing', 'belonging' 'caring', 'pulling together', 'helping each other', 'living close together', and 'getting along together' (Cloke, Goodwin & Milbourne, 1994, p.114). Meanwhile Cohen (1985) defines it as that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship and more immediate than society.

Community is about **more** than simply belonging to an active social network: it involves social identity that is shaped by customs, shared beliefs, experiences and perception. As such, 'community' involves understanding the complexities and heterogeneity of communities, recognising that communities are composed of many layers, of cliques, of different interest groupings and of people of different political allegiances with a multitude of perspectives (Cohen, 1985). Bradley and Lowe (1984) refer to community as a local social system, which is perhaps a more practical definition within a spatial context (Bryden 1994). Cohen (1985) in contrast describes it as a boundary expressing symbol; expressing a relational idea, the boundaries being the mechanisms by which people mark out their immediate and intimate social identities in relation to other people. For the purposes of this research the concept of community is defined as a social construction (which has, at its root, notions of identity and belonging) because this definition enables a better recognition of the diverse, complex and often contradictory nature of most communities.

The acceptance of the terms 'community' and 'rural' as social constructions dispels the notion of a rural community as a fairly distinct simple homogeneous self-contained unit located in peripheral areas where the ties of kinship are important (Wright, 1992). This notion of rural as a simple society is compounded by Tönnies (1950) in the phrases *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, with the term *gemeinschaft* used to describe a 'community', and the term *gesellschaft* used to describe the association/society that was the outcome of urbanisation.

The concept of community as a social construction in contrast, accommodates that fact that communities actually exist in a whole range of localities both urban and rural. It moves

away from the ideas of simple spatially defined communities towards consideration of the meanings that people associate with particular objects or events rather than their structure or form. People tend to be most sensitive to these meanings when they encounter other meanings and as such Cohen (1985) suggests the best place to identify what it is that constitutes a community is at the boundaries, within communities and between communities. This concept of 'boundaries of identity' is similar to Pahl's (1966) work in that it is concerned with social interactions between the community and the wider area and on issues of membership and non-membership of communities. It also incorporates concepts of **locality** meaning a particular geographical area, **local social systems**, which are connected to a series of structural relationships tied to a specific locality and **communion** concerned with the sense of common identity and local distinctiveness (Neuby, 1986). Boundaries can be physical, relating to location, infrastructure and communication. Thus places with strong physical boundaries can provide a fertile base for the development of territorial communities (Cox, 1998). Boundaries can be linguistic in terms of the use and non-use of local dialect. Both of these types of boundaries are however subject to substantial outside influences and as such can be considerably weakened over time. In contrast symbolic boundaries are more resilient. These relate both to the ways in which membership of a particular community is negotiated but particularly to the ways in which individuals construct the social boundaries which demarcate their sense of identity and of differences from others (Cohen, 1985).

The acceptance and adoption for the purposes of this research of the definition of rural community as a social construction and ultimately, as 'more than simply belonging to an active social network', raises a number of number of key issues for this research. This research will argue that rural communities can no longer be regarded as unitary and as such will consider how representative the groups involved in a particular community are (such as Laggan or those in Cavan/Monaghan), in relation to the wider local community. For example, disadvantaged groups and their needs can tend to be overlooked by the more dominant groups within ongoing local development actions, thereby further discriminating against the most marginalised groups and creating for them a double disadvantage (LRDP, 1999). This study will focus therefore on 1) determining whether, to what extent and for

what reasons particular groups or individuals are excluded from rural community development initiatives and 2) ensuring the evaluation approach developed as part of this study includes and involves marginalised groups.

2.3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The term community development was first used in the context of British colonial administration in Africa in 1948, although the constituent ideas may have had a longer history (Wright, 1990). It was originally 'designed to encourage self help efforts to raise standards of living and to create stable, self reliant communities with an assured sense of social and political responsibility (Holdcroft & Jones 1982, p.211). Its purpose was to improve living conditions and the infrastructure for economic developments so that local people could participate in the greater prosperity that (it was assumed) came with modernisation. Community development also aimed to set in train a political process so that local people would become "responsible citizens" capable of building and sustaining a participating democracy after independence.

From the start there was a political dimension to community development, based as it was on the principle of modernisation after independence. The critique of colonial development is well documented and indicates that it had both a repressive and a liberating potential (Popple & Shaw, 1997; Mayo, 1975). In some cases, the concept of modernisation was based on the idea of building citizenship in line with the phenomena of nation states and democratic governments, thereby enabling people to become a part of ongoing mainstream developments and maintaining the status quo in the so called 'modernisation' approach (Wright, 1990). In other situations the concept of modernisation adopted supported the development of better facilities for the marginalised in what was termed the 'basic needs' approach (Chambers & McBeth, 1992; Chambers, 1983). It was also sometimes the case that the spaces created by the 'citizen' type community development were used to foster and sustain resistance (Midgley *et al.* 1996; Crow & Allan, 1994). Thus community development can be seen to be a complex and a contradictory activity.

There is a long tradition of self-help and community action in both Britain and Ireland, much of which evolved in response to the failure of development approaches to provide for particular communities' needs. Community development was not formally introduced until the 1960s (Wright, 1992). The community development that was introduced operated within the modernisation thesis with similar images of community, ideas of participation and self-help to those of colonial community development (Chambers, 1983). This approach can also be seen to have similarly employed 'particular privileged interpretations of social reality' (Popple & Shaw, 1997, p.191). Among the main criticisms of this approach to community development was that it was based on the idea that the benefits of economic development would trickle down to those most in need, a belief that was ultimately found to be untrue. The second criticism of this approach was that it did not seek to re-distribute or challenge existing structures and as such generally made existing power-holders more powerful (Wright, 1990).

Changes in how development in general was perceived and approached have, however, altered the way in which community development is now perceived (Craig, 1998). For example the imagery of a ladder up which communities progress towards economic prosperity is no longer the main goal or direction of community development, given that this process was increasingly seen to further disadvantage those already marginalised within society (Arce *et al.* 1994). The introduction of the idea that community development is to do with achieving human potential through empowerment and that this is affected by the distribution of power between competing interests in localities marked a new approach to community development (Schuftan, 1996; Hobart, 1993). The concept of empowerment in certain circumstances can involve improvements in economic and/or social welfare, while in other circumstances it can involve changes in attitudes and confidence levels (VanderPlatt, 1995). For the purposes of this research the concept of empowerment is defined as 'a continuous process (informed by the principles of social justice) that enables people to understand, upgrade and use their capacity to better control and gain power over their own lives' (Schuftan, 1996, p.260).

The work of Foucault provides a useful framework for understanding the concept of power within empowerment. This approach offers an alternative to the traditional assumptions that power is possessed; that power flows from a centralised source from top to bottom and that power is repressive. His model has as its core, three basis elements:

1. Power is exercised rather than possessed.
2. Power is not primarily repressive, but productive.
3. Power is analysed as coming from the bottom up.

Foucault argues that the traditional model of power what Sawicki (1991) refers to as the myriad of power relations at the micro-level of society. Foucault's interpretation of power is important (for rural community development) as it allows for conceptions and different forms/types of power that can emanate from the state, class and the law; as well as networks of power relations outside such centralised locations which are important for community development. This has led to a broader recognition of the need for work with groups of people to understand the system that disadvantages them in order to change it in a sustained way, making power a more central issue within community development (Wright, 1990). The adoption of Foucault's approach to power also involves the recognition of marginalised individuals and communities as not only silent and invisible, but also as made silent and made invisible by systems that place them in relationships of economic and political dependency (Van der Ploeg, 1993; Wright, 1990). This conception of community development as empowerment is therefore very different to the modernisation argument in general or indeed the modernisation or basic needs approaches. Adopting this approach to community development as empowerment, underdevelopment/uneven development are no longer 'original conditions' to be overcome by modernisation; power (or the lack of it) is now the critical factor (Wright, 1990).

Understanding how processes of under-development have been created and maintained and why particular groups are marginalised using dependency theory are important elements of the more recent empowerment approach to community development (Kulkarni *et al.* 1992; Wright, 1992; Wright, 1990). Dependency theory has several versions. Long (1977) for example, provides a mechanism by which exchange can be understood in the context of systems of production, reproduction and exchange, thereby enabling the identification of

the mechanisms through which people are gaining, contesting or losing control of resources and power and the nature of the linkages in the chains of dependency can be traced in detail. Despite greater levels of understanding of the ebbs and flows of power, particularly at a global level, the actions of individuals and organisations involved in community development remain largely constrained by a number of factors. Most economic and social forces which are the causes of disadvantage and exclusion, are beyond control at local level (NESC, 1997). Keane (1990) noted this in relation to the difficulties of income retention in smaller communities given that they are subject to the economic dominance exerted by the larger urban and regional economy within which these communities belong. There must also be a recognition that the majority of community development is state-supported and is therefore informed by state definitions of community problems and appropriate solutions (Wright, 1990). Thus it is hardly surprising to find significant gaps between the concepts and rhetoric of community development and the actual practice of community development (Wright, 1992). Slee (1994) indeed recognises this type of 'endogenous' development as another form of 'dependent' development, dependent on and affected by developments and modifications in mature capitalism although he does recognise that it can provide more opportunities for locally based social and economic developments.

The difficulties arising from the existence of different conceptions of community development (as modernisation; as empowerment) have been compounded by a growing interest in the principles and practice of community development from all political sides and at all levels, local, national and international (Craig, 1998). The political right have embraced the communitarian ideas of Ezioni (1993) who argues that 'a good society is one in which people live freely, take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities and solve most problems at the level of the neighbourhood and household' (Anderson & Davey, 1995). Centred on the concepts of civic virtue and moral obligation, communitarian theories attribute the central failings of modern democratic society to a weakening of traditional and associational ties (Sites, 1998). Those who support communitarian thought do so on the basis that it provides a mechanism through which state control can be passed to the community, in pursuit of individual freedom. The communitarian strategy is different to the community development approach supported by

the political left. Communitarian approaches seek to build cohesion and internal resources within a community, while the more left wing approach to community development serves as a political process of mobilisation through which the poor and the disadvantaged can challenge existing structures in order to advance their needs. Notwithstanding the differences between the left and right wing approaches to community development, both must compete financially and ideologically with other more right wing and authoritarian approaches to tackling marginalisation and exclusion. A key issue within this study will therefore be the identification of the ideological basis of community development to be evaluated.

2.4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development as a process of empowerment does not make assumptions about or distinctions between the needs of particular communities; it argues instead that these needs are best defined locally by the particular community (Kulkarni *et al.* 1992). Neither does the concept of community development as a process of empowerment make a distinction between urban or rural community development. The basic needs of all communities, the need for employment opportunities, good health-care and educational facilities, pleasant environment and recreational facilities are common, although the nature and extent of provision may be different in different contexts (Barr *et al*, 1996). Community development and rural community development can therefore be seen to be broadly similar although rural community development simply focuses on the needs of those individuals and groups who live in rural areas in particular.

Urban and rural communities are equally subject to the vagaries of global markets, the increasing mobility of capital and the emergence of trans-global co-corporations (McConnell, 1991). There remain a number of other issues that have a particular relevance for rural community development. These include the fact that rural community groups frequently draw upon a smaller population base with the result that there may be fewer participants. Smaller sized rural development groups and communities may in addition

find themselves unable (for a variety of reasons) to recruit specialist assistance and thus depend more on volunteers who may lack the technical or organisation skills necessary to deal with issues of leadership (Stern, 1987). Many rural communities are geographically remote from educational institutions who otherwise might have been able to support knowledge and skills development within the community, while limited manpower and finance within these groups may further curtail this involvement (Ilbery, 1998; Hustedde, 1991). It is also the case that government decision making structures cause substantial difficulties for rural community development. These difficulties relate to its multi-dimensional nature which means that it is often dealt with through numerous vertical sectors, with a lack of horizontal communication within the structure (Wright, 1992).

2.5. ROLE AND PURPOSE OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The notion of what it is that constitutes rural community development and its purpose has changed significantly in parallel with changes in community development (from modernisation to empowerment) outlined in section 2.3. The role of rural community development is broadly similar to the current conception of community development as a form of empowerment (Kulkarni *et al.* 1992). Rural community development is defined for the purposes of this research, as a development process which addresses the needs of rural communities through empowerment and community participation (Schuftan, 1996). Community wide participation is essential if the process is to benefit all groups equally. Community development is about attaching community values to community energy (Chambers and McBeth, 1992). This is similar to the definition proposed by Kulkarni *et al.* (1991) who defined it as 'an organised and articulated effort of people to empower themselves in the contexts of their collective existence'. It involves both social and political processes in an attempt to achieve a range of objectives which will result in improvements of local standards of living for all, based on the actual local economic and social circumstances within an area (Vazquez-Barqyero, 1992).

The focus of rural community development is social development (which may lead to local economic development). Particular emphasis is placed on the 'creation of social products

such as upgraded local leadership, a culture of enterprise and innovative action and the enhanced capacity of people to act in concert' (McCarthy *et al.* 1995, p.2). Rural community development is both a means to an end and an end in itself. Its purpose is to realise the potential of communities by equipping them with the necessary skills ultimately to be able to effect the development of the whole community, with particular attention given to the inclusion of the more marginalised groups within a community.

As a process and a means to an end, it is concerned with the development of relationships between people (as citizens, residents and consumers) and institutions. In practical terms this involves support, consultation and advocacy for local organisations, creating understanding and (more equal) partnerships between organisations (Barr *et al.*, 1996). Central to this is the concept of empowerment through participation with a shift in emphasis from consultation to active participation and ultimately to locally driven initiatives (Humphries, 1994).

The extent to which rural community development can provide a mechanism through which communities can create room for manoeuvre/change, moderating and modifying the socially, economically and politically structured disadvantage in places like Laggan and Cavan-Monaghan depends on a variety of internal/local factors and external (regional and national) factors. McDowell (1994) argues that local culture and, in particular, two key principles (which in turn are influenced by a range of other variables) are critical to the success of rural community development. He identifies these principles as (i) Mutual trust and (ii) Reward for effort. The 'mutual trust' principle relates to how large the radius of trust is within a group (i.e. how far does the sense of belonging to a community apply, who is brother/sister/related and who is other) (Chambers & McBeth, 1992). Bryden *et al.* (1997) argues that without this sense of community/common cause, it is not possible to support the levels of participation necessary for rural community development. The second "reward for effort" principle relates to whether and to what extent people feel that they can control their own destinies, i.e. what is the connection between effort and reward. The extent to which the ability of communities to engage in community development is affected by the existence/absence of levels of mutual trust and of reward for effort is unclear.

Participation is more likely where there is a level of trust between group members and where group participants can see that their efforts are likely to have some effect.

Studies of successful community initiatives have also highlighted a number of other characteristics that were seen to have contributed significantly to a particular community's success as follows:

- a willingness to experiment with development strategies;
- a high level of intra-community discussion of community and development issues;
- some level of dissatisfaction with the status quo;
- some prior experience of a community wide development effort;
- high level of inter and intra-community participation

(Flora & Flora, 1990; Fallows, 1989; Dewitt *et al.* 1988; Shaffer & Summers, 1988).

Other local factors affecting the ability of particular communities to act include the quality of local leadership, the capacity of the area/group to take action and the focus/ethos of the group (Selsky, 1991). This is compounded by the fact that as Keane & O'Cinneide (1986) noted, the capacity to generate or indeed support local action is not evenly distributed, as resource endowments and potentials are different. Communities are also at different stages of preparedness to engage in self-help initiatives. In this situation, idealised notions of rural communities as unified entities, capable of acting consensually can be seen to have contributed to a general lack of understanding and awareness of the complexities and the amount of time involved in generating rural community development (Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986).

Other contextual factors affecting the success of rural community development include the willingness of development agencies to recognise the importance of rural community development, and the need to engage and work with rural communities. It is also the case that decisions made on a national and international level can have substantial downstream effects for small rural communities (Phillips, 1998). Thus, despite a strong rhetorical commitment to rural community development at an institutional/national level, wider political and social concerns may constrain the actions of development agency staff and

indirectly the more radical nature of a particular rural community development action (Wright, 1990).

2.6. AN OUTLINE OF THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A range of approaches has been used to deliver rural community development. These approaches operate at a range of levels and are conceived and executed in different ways involving different activities. Wright (1992) argues that the choice of a particular approach is influenced by three key factors:

- the context - local, national and international - in which rural community development is located and which shape the expectations of the role and outcomes;
- the rhetoric of rural community development which is often more radical than the context;
- the practice of community work which is negotiated from the tension between context and rhetoric.

The nature of a particular rural community development initiative is, in addition, profoundly influenced by the nature of its implementation (Midmore, 1998). As such any comprehensive review of rural community development must include consideration of various ways in which rural community development can be implemented (Saraceno, 1995).

The adoption for the purposes of this research, of the notion of rural community development as a form of empowerment effectively precludes the adoption of a wholly top-down approach to rural community development conceived and executed by central government (Schuftan, 1996). At the other extreme bottom-up approaches to rural community development, which Quevit (1994) termed 'spontaneous', which are locally based and controlled, with little direct external funding are rare (Bryden *et al.* 1997). The reality is that most communities are not able, in isolation, to help themselves to begin to act as agents of change (Keane & O'Cinneide, 1986). The majority of rural community development approaches can therefore be seen to fall somewhere between these two

extremes, involving both local and external agencies. The exact form of an approach is determined by the nature of the relationships between all the different groups involved (community, public authorities and central government). This type of voluntarist type approach generally involves the local community and some form of intervention by the public authorities with the development of both formal and informal tripartite partnership structures involving the community, local business and the local authorities (Quevit, 1994). The impetus for rural community development should ideally come from within a particular group or community (Schuftan, 1996). Often a particular issue around which there is a strong local reaction stimulates this. In other situations however, the impetus for action may come from outside the community, in response to a recognition that a particular community/group may have needs which are not being addressed or articulated.

The voluntarist approach represents an externally motivated development approach which recognises the principle of area based self-help as a mechanism for the delivery of rural community development (Murphy, 1990). In some cases the relations between the various groups involved are subject to a formal agreement relating both to objectives and implementation in what is termed a contractual approach. The nature and effectiveness of this arrangement is strongly influenced by the political context in which these arrangements are conceived. This approach is therefore generally more suited to less centralised locations with strong regional government. As an approach, it is important because it highlights the importance of both an institutional framework (within which different actions and relationships can be included) and an appropriate organisational framework within which the relationships between the different actors can be understood and negotiated. Other voluntarist approaches are less formalised and more process orientated, emphasising the importance of processes of capacity building, of partnership and of empowerment on an area basis (Quevit, 1994), while strategies for development are based on the needs, resources and circumstances of a particular area.

One of the most substantial problems with the voluntarist approach is its limited time span; community development programmes generally last 3 to 5 years. Rural community development is, however, notoriously slow and the limited time-scale of most programmes

effectively means that support for a particular initiative can be withdrawn before any significant change took place (Midmore, 1997). Additionally, where the presence of a particular programme or involvement of a particular organisation has raised local communities' expectations, the abrupt withdrawal of this support can cause substantial and lasting damage to a particular community (McConnell, 1991). The short-term nature of many such initiatives also requires that considerable emphasis to be placed on the establishment of the provision of local training and development of local networks which might continue to have a substantial role after the completion of a particular programme. On a more positive note, the effective implementation of a voluntarist community development initiative can encourage and support the establishment of real and lasting partnerships between local groups, local and national government and other interested agencies. The ultimate goal of such partnerships is the sharing of power by the community, the state and other agencies.

2.7. KEY ELEMENTS IN THE PROCESS OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Rural community development can be broken up into a number of key processes including empowerment, capacity building (animation and facilitation) and participation (Murray & Dunn, 1995). This section examines these processes in more depth in order to enable a better understanding of the complexities and dynamics involved in rural community development.

2.7.1. Empowerment

Empowerment is the both the means to rural community development, and the objective of rural community development. Empowerment is a continuous process, not the outcome of a single event, that enables people to understand, upgrade and use their capacity to better control and gain power over their lives (Schuftan, 1996). It provides people with choices and the ability to choose, as well as an opportunity to gain more control over the resources they need to improve their conditions. It engenders and encourages a capacity and a responsibility for criticism at all levels (Kulkarni *et al.* 1992). It embraces and involves

both individual esteem and collective organisations to break the chain of dependency. The aim is to achieve human potential by facilitating people to become subjects in their own world rather than objects in other people's world (Oakley & Marden, 1984). Given that empowerment is about the individual and the collective, it is not easy to say what is really empowering in rural community development work. Any definition by its nature will also always carry the biases of the author. In addition what is empowering in one context or indeed at one particular time is not in another. What is clear however is that the empowerment of some, generally involves the dis-empowerment of others usually the current power holders (Kulkarni *et al.* 1992). The danger with empowerment is that because it generally involves the re-distribution of power, it can in some cases threaten and antagonise existing authorities to such a level that they implement repressive actions which could inhibit any further community development (Schuftan, 1996). Humphries (1994) has also identified a danger in relation to its current popularity. She argues that the notion of empowerment is so ill defined and claimed by such diverse constituencies as to accommodate any and all theoretical positions and can, as such, serve as a justification for oppressive practices, thereby subverting its emancipatory potential. For empowerment to be empowerment she argues it must be informed by 'the ideals of social justice' (Humphries, 1994, p.186).

Empowerment is not a tangible process. Rather it is a way of prompting, encouraging and facilitating individuals and groups to engage in critical social reflection about the implications of their own and other's actions at all levels (Humphries, 1994). All the various different processes involved in rural community development can be seen to feed into this process of empowerment and feed on this process. In capacity-building for example, Schuftan (1996, p.261) suggested that empowerment might involve:

- Enabling individuals/families/communities/organisations (through information, training and organisation) continuously to upgrade their ability to know, analyse and understand their situation and their problems;
- Coming up with a shared conceptual framework of the causes of the problem(s) at hand;
- Exposing people to relevant information, especially about the real underlying and basic causes behind their problems, so as to change their perceptions (includes warning

people about 'misinformation' they are exposed to and replacing it).

In general terms, empowering activities are those which encourage and facilitate individuals and communities to engage in critical thought. This notion of empowerment has implications for this study. This study must ensure that the nature of the research carried out does not hinder this process of empowerment. It will therefore be necessary to determine not only whether case study participants have been empowered as a result of their participation in their rural community development initiative but also what the effect of their participation in this research was.

2.7.2. Capacity building

Self reliance is dependent on building human capacity, the essence of which is the creation of social capital of various forms which could benefit the whole community (Narayan, 1993). Capacity building can be defined as the mechanism through which organisational expertise (related to leadership, mediation and conflict resolution, group processes, understanding the business of government and the articulation and achievement of a shared vision) within a rural community can be developed (Murray & Dunn, 1995). The purpose of this process is to forge new skills within communities and thereby lessen dependency on outside experts. Murray & Dunn (1990) describe this process as the institutionalisation of a condition of readiness into a rural community's structure. The process of capacity building is both gradual and complex, relating to the capacity of an entire local population as distinct from select individuals within the population (Kearney *et al.* 1994). It is dependent on a number of variables, including the willingness and openness of particular communities to recognise their needs and to take action accordingly (Shortall & Shucksmith, 1998; Kearney, 1994). Mechanisms for achieving this kind of development include the provision of a variety of training and education opportunities at all levels and the successful implementation of small initiatives (NESF, 1994). In certain situations, the assistance of a trained facilitator or animator (a person brought in from outside with the necessary animation and facilitation skills) may be an important part of this process.

The process of capacity building can be broken down into a number of stages leading to self-sustaining development (NESC, 1994; Bennett, 1989,):

1. Establishing preconditions for development - 'The Animation Process'
   'Acquiring the know-how and learning'.
2. Encouraging and supporting initiatives - 'The Facilitation Process'
   'Putting the know how to use'.

2.7.2.1. The animation process

The animation process usually begins with the identification of the range of individuals or groups that could have a contribution to make (Shortall & Shucksmith, 1998; Bennett, 1989). Methods used to identify and enlist potential contributors include personal contact, public meetings, local surveys and training programmes in community leadership and business skills (Moseley & Cherrett, 1993). The next step is the establishment of a structure that brings together all these potential players. This is an ongoing process that may require input from an animator in the initial stages. The purpose of the animator is to support the process and the community involved in the process. Murray & Dunn (1995, p.91) describe the role of the animator - 'to reinforce learning by doing' through assisting rural communities with the formation of a common vision, developing community audit skills and demonstrating the importance of setting and prioritising realistic objectives.

2.7.2.2. The facilitation process

Facilitation in contrast is a much narrower and more personalised form of animation involving intensive contacts between the facilitator and the group or individual involved. It has a variety of objectives depending on the objectives of the particular programme. Within the LEADER II Programme for example, facilitation work focuses on both the provision of assistance to particular project promoters to develop and prepare funding proposals, but also on the provision of support for the development of particular community groups (Shorthall & Shucksmith, 1998; Kearney *et al.* 1994). The danger with this

approach is that the least articulate and powerful may need considerably more support that other more powerful groups or individuals but may be overlooked simply because the more powerful tend to be the more vocal.

2.7.3. Participation

There are many different types of participation which range from simply informing people of the existence of a project, through involving representatives of the community, to encouraging active participation (Midgley *et al.* 1986; Arnstein, 1969). Participation models can therefore be seen to range from tokenism (passive participation) at one extreme to full participation (self-mobilisation) at the other (Burns *et al.* 1995; Sandbrook, 1994). Early attempts by public agencies to encourage community participation were largely controlled by professionals and tended to focus on consultation. More recent attempts have sought to encourage more active involvement of the wider community through a variety of techniques which include the use of various forms of partnership, the use of animators, representation on committees, public meetings, focus groups, planning for real exercises, community audits, village appraisals, community education, networking and other consultative procedures (Bryden, 1997; Moseley & Cherrett, 1993). A distinction can therefore clearly be drawn between participative and representative involvement (Wright 1990; Varley, 1988).

The quality and nature of participation facilitated at a local level have been identified as critical elements in rural community development to ensure community wide involvement (Chambers, 1992 & 1983). As a further element of this participative process, local groups will also have to learn to negotiate and work with other organisations. The sustainability of rural community development will in some situations be judged by whether the local group has managed to gain some more permanent control over resource allocation and decision-making and not just as a one-off event. Moser (1996) argues that it is only through this type of participation that the sharing and subsequent transfer of power by regulatory institutions to groups which are deliberately attempting to control their own lives can take place.

Participation within rural community development cannot be judged by participant numbers, by numbers of meetings, etc. It is a question of quality and inclusiveness (i.e. whether all the different interests involved are represented) (Curtin & Varley, 1991). This issue of the quality and the inclusiveness of participation will therefore need to be assessed within this study both in relation to the evaluation of the two case studies and in relation to the successful development and review of a participatory evaluation approach for rural community development.

2.8. CONCLUSIONS: RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: AN EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH?

Rural community development provides a way of working with people, starting with their needs and aspirations. It recognises that there is a range of different interests within communities and seeks to create more space for subordinated individuals within existing structures. It emphasises the qualitative (i.e. social change), and seeks to make qualitative differences to the lives of those individuals who participate in this type of development and who may in turn spread to others their greater confidence and ability to act. It is a collective process, with a particular emphasis on 'process' and on how change is achieved, as well as on the final outcomes (McConnell, 1991). At its most radical it strives to give ordinary people a voice for expressing and acting on their extraordinary needs and desires, in opposition to the vested interests of global economic and political powers to counter the increasing commodification of human welfare and human beings themselves (Gamble & Weil, 1997).

Although it has sometimes been dismissed as an essentially local approach to social and or economic problems associated with globalisation and the emergence of trans-national organisations, it is increasingly seen to incorporate a global dimension (Craig, 1998). Local actions in themselves are usually the consequences of decisions taken far from the local arena and as such community development to be effective needs to be informed by an understanding of the broader context within which the decisions are taken (Humphries,

1994). Community development can provide a practical mechanism by which individuals, communities and development agencies can apply the principles of 'thinking global and acting local' at a local level.

Adopting the notion of community development as a form of empowerment for the purposes of this research has a number of implications for this study and specifically for the identification and development of an appropriate evaluative approach for rural community development (McCarthy *et al.*1995). It emphasises the importance of the quality and nature of the processes involved in rural community development (e.g. the inclusiveness of the participation). It also highlights the importance of the adoption of an inclusive evaluation approach that reinforces the ongoing processes of rural community development. The need for the identification and measurement of key rural community development processes (like empowerment, capacity building and participation), their outcomes and the interactions between them, at both an individual and a collective level, offers substantial challenges for rural community development evaluation. Chapter 3 examines these complexities associated with rural community development evaluation in detail. This chapter also outlines the various different approaches that have been used to evaluate rural community development. The chapter identifies the participatory approach as a mechanism with considerable potential to address the challenges rural community development poses for evaluation.

CHAPTER 3. A REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

3.1. INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE OF EVALUATING RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the nature and purpose of evaluation and rural community development evaluation in particular. This chapter explores the complexities associated with the processes of evaluation. It identifies a number of different evaluation approaches and their characteristics and reviews their suitability for the evaluation of rural community development. The aim of this chapter is to identify the approach that has the most potential for the evaluation of rural community development. This approach is subsequently adopted and developed within Chapter 4 with its implementation described in Chapter 5.

Rural community development evaluation has a number of internal and external purposes which include:

a) An assessment of achievements (both in relation to the tangible outcomes and the less tangible social products);
b) An examination of the effectiveness of methods of delivery;
c) Learning about the nature of rural community development and the contexts in which it occurs. This is a particularly important role because there is as yet only a limited understanding of the link between cause and effect within rural community development. There is in addition a lack of comprehensive theories about how to achieve change (Midmore, 1997; NESC, 1994).
d) The provision of learning and empowerment opportunities for evaluation participants.

Ideally rural community development evaluation approaches should embrace all of these purposes, thereby focusing not only on the effectiveness and the outcomes of the process but also on the structures and procedures that facilitate and inhibit relevant innovation (NESC, 1994). Rural community development should also contribute to the development of good practice through the promotion of ongoing learning and empowerment (Everitt, 1996).

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 draw on Chapter 2 to examine the challenges rural community development poses for evaluation. Sections 3.4 and 3.5 examine the various different purposes of evaluation and the complexities associated with the evaluation process. Sections 3.6 and 3.7 identify and examine the development of a number of different approaches to evaluation in general and rural community development evaluation in particular. Section 3.8 details the influence of the evaluator and the evaluator's value system on the research. The chapter concludes with the identification of a participatory-based constructivist approach to evaluation as an approach with significant potential to enable a comprehensive evaluation of rural community development.

3.2. THE CHALLENGE RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POSES FOR EVALUATION

The evaluation of rural community development is a complex activity that mirrors the complex, time consuming and multi-dimensional nature of the development processes. Figure 3.1 outlines some of the key challenges rural community development poses for evaluation.

Figure 3.1. The challenges rural community development poses for evaluation

- Rural community development is a complex and multi-dimensional process.
- Understanding of the complexities involved in rural community development is limited.
- Rural community development is a long-term development approach the full effect of which will only be realised in the longer term.
- Rural community development depends upon local participation to meet local needs.
- Tangible and intangible social products are created through the processes of rural community development. The intangible outcomes by their nature are difficult to identify, measure, and evaluate. Intangible outcomes include empowerment, capacity building, & participation.
- The outcomes of rural community development are dependent on context specific factors.
- Rural community development initiatives are generally quite context specific. The majority of rural community development programmes are small scale and localised in nature, effectively precluding the use of larger scale statistical analysis.
- Many rural community development initiatives have been developed on an 'ad hoc' basis with an absence of clear objectives and targets.
- Many rural community programmes are politically committed to existing strategies.
- Local innovators while interested to learn, are not always favourably disposed toward evaluation.

(Author, 1999)

Rural community development is an attractive development option, surrounded by the rhetoric of community and self help, with a tendency to promise more than it can deliver (O'Cinneide & Walsh, 1990; Sprechts, 1975). Rural community development evaluation can be a difficult exercise, as lack of success is not always as immediately visible, nor does it have such obvious catastrophic consequences, as might be the case in other areas such as private enterprise (Turok, 1992).

Rural community development is not simply a question of undertaking projects and producing a series of outputs. It is a process which depends upon and emphasises the need for local participation to meet local needs and problems and through which intangible social products are created. Harmon & Mayer (1986) in their examination of the nature of social development argue that social problems (and associated social products) are inherently 'wicked' in that they cannot be defined and cannot be separated from other problems. Social products and outcomes are not always predictable. This is in contrast to 'tame' problems, the solutions to which are technocratic in nature and the resolution of which can be seen to have an objectively 'best' solution. This classification of social problems as

'wicked' while somewhat negative, indicates the complexities of social processes. The outcomes of these processes in a rural development context, include upgraded local leadership, a culture of enterprise, an enhanced local capacity to work collectively and enhanced levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (McCarthy *et al.* 1996). These social products are the mechanisms through which a particular community is equipped with the skills necessary to cope with the various threats and opportunities that they may face. The success of the rural community development processes rests on the premise that increasingly people's ability to more effectively manage their own resources is the best mechanism for ensuring their long-term future. As such, consideration of the processes of rural community development including participation and capacity building, and their outcomes, which are crucial to the development of a comprehensive rural community development evaluation approach.

Rural community development can be undertaken at different levels from the policy and programme levels to the level of individual projects. It is particularly at programme level where 'it is possible to make action patterns manageable and to decide on priorities that it is at its most effective' (Van Dusseldorp, 1990). Based on this belief, substantial resources have been invested in the establishment of a variety of programmes, particularly since the late 1980s (Midmore, 1997). In reality, the processes involved are still in their infancy and the understanding of the complexities involved, limited. In addition to this the long-term nature of the approach means that the effectiveness of such programmes (as mechanisms for implementing rural development policy) has yet to be conclusively proven. Programme level evaluations therefore have an important role to play in determining the effectiveness and wider applicability of rural community development programmes. The complexities of the processes involved and the intangible and long-term nature of the outcomes however pose a series of conceptual and methodological challenges for evaluation.

Many rural community development evaluations have focused on measuring what is tangible in term of physical and economic outputs (the number of full time equivalent jobs created, for example) with only brief consideration, if at all, of the more intangible or social

product outcomes (Midmore, 1997). An evaluation of the tangible and particularly economic outcomes (rates of return, cost/benefit ratios, etc.) in isolation can, depending on its objectives, provide a partial assessment of delivery mechanisms. Padaki (1996) identifies a number of other areas of concern when undertaking an evaluation. These relate to the ability of the evaluation to consider the non-occurrence of expected outcomes, the occurrence of non-expected outcomes, the effect of macro influences on micro outcomes and the long-term sustainability of any action. These concerns relate to both tangible and social product outcomes but are particularly difficult in relation to expected social products, which are by their very nature difficult to determine. There is thus a need for the adoption of a more comprehensive approach to evaluation processes that considers both the tangible and the less tangible products and outcomes of rural community development.

A series of difficulties exists in relation to the evaluation of the less tangible process orientated outcomes of rural community development. These difficulties can be attributed to the nature of these processes, the measurement of which raises difficult methodological issues (Midmore, 1998; Gregory & Martin, 1994; NESC, 1994; OECD, 1994; McConnell, 1991; O'Cinneide, & O'Conghaile, 1990; Potten, 1989). The absence of recognised techniques or processes for evaluating these outcomes also means that it is possible for claims to be made which cannot easily be verified or disputed (Midmore, 1998; Midmore 1987). It is not therefore surprising that Kearney *et al.* (1994) in their evaluation of the Irish LEADER I Programme urged caution in the interpretation of claims made by Local Action Groups particularly in relation to the intangible outcomes and particularly the social products of their particular programmes.

Methodological difficulties are compounded by the fact that the outcomes of rural community development programmes are dependent on a variety of context-specific factors. McDowell (1994) captured the essence of this problem when he described the elements of success in local development as so unpredictable from one locale to the next, rendering successful development as phenomenonological, if not purely serendipitous. The range and extent of external and local influences involved in the rural community

development process can be seen to render most 'formal evaluation modelling procedures largely irrelevant' (Midmore, 1997). Context specific factors include: differences between communities in terms of community resources and locations and differences in the dominance of certain international, national and regional economic forces on local events (Mannion, 1996). There is also a growing body of evidence which suggests that, where successful rural community development does occur, its success frequently depends on the special initiative, leadership and action of an individual(s) who proves the expert(s) wrong and who is capable of encouraging and empowering others (McDowell, 1994). Evaluation systems need therefore to be developed to include consideration of the differences between communities and within communities, so that comparisons between programmes can be made more meaningful.

The localised nature of the majority of rural community development programmes makes it hard to obtain anything more than elementary baseline data with which to determine the possible impacts of particular programmes (Midmore, 1997). In addition to this, the ad hoc nature of many rural community development programmes, which have developed in response to a particular issue, can also cause difficulties for evaluation. This is particularly the case where there is an absence of clear objectives and targets with which to compare progress (Midmore, 1998). Even where targets and objectives do exist there is no guarantee that these are either comprehensive or representative and as such the mechanisms and procedures used to establish such operational structures may also need to be evaluated. In addition to this, monitoring processes often tend to be rather ad hoc making the task of evaluation more complex.

The small scale of most rural community development programmes further compounds these problems. Their scale effectively prohibits the use of larger scale statistical analysis. Lipsey's 'Law of Large Numbers' (Lipsey & Crystal, 1995) for example, which allows the variability of human economic and social behaviour to be described in terms of statistical rather than deterministic hypotheses can be seen to dissolve at this level which reveals real individuals, businesses and communities (Midmore, 1997). This inability to generalise can

be seen to make the task of evaluation more direct and the evaluation process more invasive, which in turn raises a series of ethical issues relating to how information is to be collected, analysed and presented (Gosling, 1995).

Another major difficulty that evaluation faces is that many rural community programmes are too politically committed to their existing strategies of development to countenance potentially critical evaluators (Stern, 1987). It is also the case that local innovators while generally interested to learn, are not generally favourably disposed toward evaluation at the early stages of an innovation cycle for example, first generation innovators tend to be committed enthusiasts uncritical of the policies they advocate (Stern, 1997).

3.3. THE NATURE OF PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Evaluation is a process that people engage in as part of their daily lives. People constantly examine and judge changing circumstances, relationships, and power structures in the wider community. Scrinivasan (1981) accordingly defines evaluation as one the processes of human survival.

The concept of evaluation has changed dramatically over the past hundred years (Quinn-Patton, 1997). Evaluation activity has developed particularly over the last 30 years, where it has been transformed from a sideline activity into a minor profession especially in the USA (House, 1993). Programme evaluation was initially developed in the United States as a tool for public administration, specifically in relation to educational legislation. In the late 1960s and early 1970s its focus and application expanded to include the assessment of major social programmes such as health and social security (Berlage & Stockage, 1992).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to evaluate is 'to examine and judge the worth, quality, value, significance, amount, degree or condition of an object, event, product or process' (Oxford English Dictionary, 1995). The concept of evaluation as a judgement is

a difficult one to put into practice as one of the most critical issues in any evaluation is - whose values are used to make the judgement or establish the evaluative criteria?

Stern (1987, p.2) defines evaluation as 'any systematic attempt to learn (from innovative programmes or interventions) with the intention of improving (similar policies and programmes) in the future'. This definition places learning as the essential concern of evaluation. Casley and Kumar (1987, p.10) in contrast define evaluation in slightly different terms. They see it as 'a systematic, objective analysis of performance, efficiency and impact in relation to objectives, its ultimate purpose being not to pronounce a verdict but rather to draw lessons from experience in order to adjust existing action and to modify and improve future effort'. Both definitions promote the role of evaluation as a learning opportunity for those involved, as does Stufflebeams (1994, p.51), whose view of the purpose of evaluation can be summarised 'as not to prove, but to improve'.

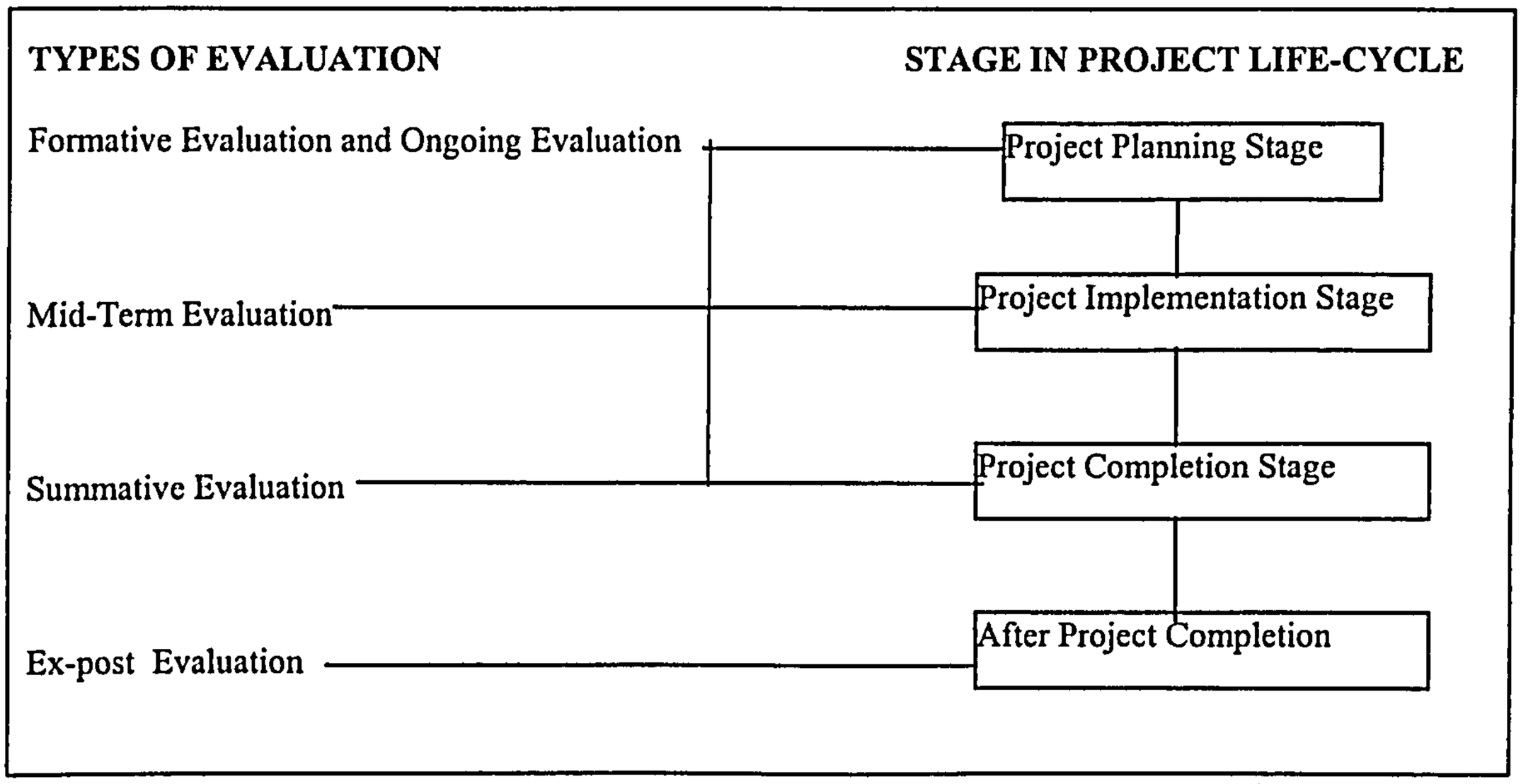
3.3.1. Different types of evaluation

A wide range of evaluation types exist. Patton (1982) identified 33 types including amongst others 'criterion referenced', 'performance evaluation', 'formative evaluation' 'cost benefit evaluation' and 'programme evaluation'. Each approach serves a variety of purposes depending on:

1) The stage in the life-cycle of the project at which the evaluation is undertaken;
2) The purpose of the evaluation;
3) The terms of reference for the evaluation;
4) The evaluator;
5) The evaluation methodology and process;
6) The proposed end use of the evaluation?

Evaluation can be undertaken at different stages in the life cycle of a programme. Figure 3.2 illustrates some of the different types of evaluation.

Figure 3.2. Different types of evaluation



(Author, 1999)

Evaluation can be carried out prior to or during development **(formative evaluation)** or after development *(***summative evaluation)** (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). **Formative evaluations** are intended to improve performance (Hyde & Shaftnitz, 1979). **Summative evaluations** in contrast are aimed at assessing the outcomes and impacts of a programme. Full scale **formative evaluations** or appraisals are relatively rare and are generally better applied before a programme is undertaken in order to predict outcomes, identify weaknesses and to guide decisions on whether or not to proceed with its implementation. In contrast **summative evaluations** (also sometimes called terminal evaluations and ex-post evaluations) carried out some years after programme completion can be used to identify longer-term outcomes and to address sustainability considerations (Marsden & Oakley, 1990).

Evaluations can also be **mid term**, (i.e. undertaken mid way through the implementation of a particular programme). Evaluations can be **ongoing (interim)** throughout the operation

of a programme, though again these are less common (McEldowney, 1997, p.176). **Ongoing** and **interim** evaluations tend to be used for internal management purposes. The majority of evaluations tend to be **summative**, undertaken either by professional evaluators or by internal staff.

3.4. THE PURPOSES OF EVALUATION

The purposes of evaluation can be both general and specific. Turok (1990) distinguishes between internal and external evaluation, social accounting and understanding, and explanation purposes. Internal evaluations are usually undertaken by management for their own purposes and generally only circulated within the organisation. External evaluations in contrast are generally undertaken by an external evaluator and are intended for wider circulation. Evaluation also has a very specific purpose as a tool in planning and monitoring and in the promotion of ongoing dialogue (Chelminsky & Shadish, 1997). In reality the distinction between internal and external evaluations is less relevant than might be imagined since evaluations can be tailored to address any purpose (Beaudoux *et al.* 1992; Thomas, 1983; Algie, 1975).

Evaluation serves a broad educational function, providing an important mechanism for learning about problems and the contexts in which they occur (Chelminsky & Shadish, 1997; Gordan *et al.* 1988,). Feek (1988, p.33) argues this clearly when he states that 'there is little point in evaluation unless it results in improved practice', going on to argue that 'it needs to be a never-ending process and needs to be part of any organisation's work'. Marsden and Oakley (1990) also view evaluation as an important learning opportunity for the project community, enhancing both confidence and capacity.

Evaluation also has a role to play in the promotion of social awareness and ultimately social action. 'Evaluation is a form of participation and is an end in itself rather than just a means to an end' (Beaudoux *et al.* 1992, p.92). Moreover evaluation is increasingly seen as a mechanism by which the consciousness of people can be raised. VanderPlatt (1995) views it as a narrative that is designed to increase subjective and inter-subjective understanding, identifying points of conflict and connection, its ultimate role being to challenge the status quo (Scrinivansan, 1981). The various purposes of evaluation are identified as follows:

1. Accountability Purposes

- to measure results.
- to assess ongoing performance/efficiency.
- to examine financial accountability.
- to satisfy funding agency requirements.
- to assess dead weight[3] and displacement[4].

2. Management Purposes

- to assess achievements.
- to assess the effectiveness of delivery systems.
- to improve communication.
- to improve performance.
- to identify mechanisms by which management can be made more efficient.
- to strengthen management.

3. Learning Purposes

- to gain a better understanding.
- to provide supportive information & feedback.

[3] dead-weight: the extent to which the activity stimulated, would have taken place anyway
[4] displacement: the extent to which the activity displaces existing activities

- to gain exploratory insights into problems.
- to understand and learn from past and present efforts to solve problems.
- to understand how organisations learn.
- to plan for the future.

4. Social Action and Empowerment Purposes

- to facilitate the growth of local ownership.
- to enhance the local skills base.
- to encourage and facilitate ongoing action and commitment.

(Chelminsky & Shadish, 1997; VanderPlatt, 1995; Marsden & Oakley, 1990; Scrinivansan, 1981).

This list is not exhaustive, nor are the categories mutually exclusive. Certain approaches that use particular research techniques are more suited to certain purposes than others. Evaluations can be undertaken for a variety of quite specific purposes but also for less obvious or covert purposes. Gregory and Martin (1994, p.46) have identified and described a number of these covert purposes:

- ‘an eyewash evaluation’: to make a programme look good
- ‘a whitewash evaluation’: to cover the faults of a much cherished programme
- ‘a submarine evaluation’: to sink an unpopular programme
- ‘a posture evaluation’: to enhance the case for ongoing support or further funding
- ‘a postponement evaluation’: to put off the need to act

These types of evaluation, conceived with an explicit agenda, can be seen to suffer from what Scriven (1996, p.395) terms ‘errors of commission’. The evaluation is focused on a particular issue (for a particular and often implicit reason) to the exclusion of other relevant issues. Such ‘errors of commission’ can in turn be seen to lead to what Scriven terms

'errors of omission' where important and often-critical issues can be excluded from the evaluation process.

3.5. THE COMPLEXITIES OF EVALUATION PROCESSES

In all evaluation contexts there are multiple and competing potential audiences (i.e. groups and individuals who have vested interests in what is being evaluated (Stern, 1987)). These include policy makers, funders, administrators and managers and the intended beneficiaries. Different groups are generally referred to as 'the stakeholders' (all those who have a stake in the outcomes or in the process of implementation itself) in evaluation terminology (Green, 1994, p.531). The evaluation process by its nature generally involves the promotion of the particular values and interests of some groups over other groups and is therefore a political process. Increased recognition of the political nature of evaluation and the evaluation process has occurred (Green, 1994; Cronbach & Associates, 1980). The evaluator in turn as a key element in the evaluation process has a strong influence over the outcomes of an evaluation. This gives the evaluator and the evaluation profession a wider political influence even if they do not aspire to it (Green, 1994; Cronbach & Associates, 1980). Evaluation must therefore be seen to be a political instrument which 'makes implicit political statements about issues like the problematic nature of some programmes and the un-challengability of others' (Weiss, 1987, p.48).

Another important issue within evaluation relates to how legitimacy can be conferred to the process of interpretation and translation of evaluation conclusions into recommendations for action. This issue has yet to be resolved (Quinn-Patton, 1997). The selection of the criteria against which performance will be judged is another complex concern within evaluation. In response to this, evaluative criteria are increasingly identified pluralistically as multiple sets, rather than as single criterion (VanderPlatt, 1995). The difficulty remains, however, that these criteria mean different things to different groups depending on their particular interests and concerns. The challenge for evaluation is to find ways of identifying

and including different value systems within the evaluation process, in order to ensure that the outcomes of the evaluation are relevant to all stakeholders. The notions of relevance and utilisation are critical in any consideration of the credibility of a particular evaluation approach. The question of what if anything can be inferred about an evaluation approach from a failure to implement its recommendations is another important concern in any consideration of evaluation approaches and processes (Scriven, 1996).

3.6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION APPROACHES

Evaluation has tended to be categorised into either quantitative or qualitative approaches according to the nature of the primary techniques used and the data collected. Quantitative approaches are generally used for numbers and other data that can be transferred into numbers and are therefore focused on obtaining objective measures. Qualitative approaches in contrast are used for words and other data which come in other non-numerical form and generally therefore involve a more interpretative, descriptive approach to the subject matter (Robson, 1993). McEldowney (1992) distinguishes between the quantitative and the qualitative approach in terms of a controlling approach and a helping approach. In general terms qualitative evaluators tend to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The two concepts are often taken to represent polar opposites, but qualitative approaches are not simply a lack of quantification; they are instead increasingly associated with a concern for context and direct experience, rather than more remote numerical performance measures constructed by the evaluator (Paddock, 1996; Sherman & Webb, 1988). In the same way the assumption that programme products are necessarily quantifiable and process outcomes are invariably 'subjective' is also being re-examined (Padaki, 1996, p.38). There is a growing realisation however that what distinguishes one evaluation process from another is no longer a question of techniques, or the nature of data collected. The distinction between different approaches is increasingly seen to relate to the issue of how knowledge is constructed and who it is that has defined the evaluation question (Green, 1994).

Green (1994) identifies two distinct overarching evaluation paradigms, the positivist paradigm and the constructivist or naturalistic[5] paradigm within which different evaluation approaches can be situated. The positivist paradigm is based on the assumption of the existence of a single objective reality, while the constructivist paradigm emphasises the role and importance of humans in constructing realities. This distinction between categories is broadly similar to that of Guba and Lincoln (1989) given that it is based on the way in which knowledge is constructed. Guba and Lincoln (1989) identify four categories of evaluation (which they term 'generations') with which they equate the development of evaluation: the first generation, measurement; the second, description; the third, judgement: and the fourth, the responsive-constructivist approach. They argue that each generation has become more informed and sophisticated thus ameliorating 'the imperfections, gaps and naiveté of earlier formulations' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.22). Figure 3.3 outlines the different paradigms and highlights the differences between them revealing that different approaches answer different questions for different audiences.

[5] The term 'naturalistic' has been largely superseded by the term constructivist because of its similarity to nineteenth-century British naturalism, with which it has little in common. The term naturalistic also conjures up the notion of promoting inquiry in natural settings as the solution to paradigm dilemmas, which is not the case (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). There is also a growing consensus that social and behavioural realities are mental constructions which has in turn lead to the wider use of the term constructivism (Green, 1994). The term constructivist is therefore used throughout this study.

Figure 3.3. The differences between evaluation approaches

Paradigm	Approach	Key Values Promoted	Audience	Preferred Techniques	Focus for Evaluation
Positivist	Positivist	Efficiency, Accountability, Theoretical & Causal Knowledge	High level policy and decision makers	Experiments and quasi-experiments, Cost benefit analysis	Evaluates against stated objectives
Positivist	Post Positivist	Practicality, Quality Control, Utility	Mid level managers, & other decision makers	Structured & unstructured surveys, Questionnaires, Interviews, Observations	Evaluates against objectives not all of which may be explicitly stated
Constructivist	Interpretivist	Understanding, Diversity, Solidarity	Programme directors, staff and beneficiaries	Case studies, Interviews, Observation, Document Review	Evaluates how the programme is experienced by the various stakeholders
Constructivist	Constructivist	Empowerment, Social action	Programme beneficiaries & other powerless groups	Stakeholder participation in structured & unstructured interviews, quantitative & qualitative design/method	Evaluates how the programme is experiences and how goals and activities serve to maintain power and resource inequalities.

Source: Adapted from Green (1994, p.540)

3.6.1. The 'positivist' evaluation paradigm

3.6.1.1. The 'positivist' evaluation approach

This type of approach focuses on measuring, on describing and on judging the effectiveness of physical outcomes, e.g. the number of units produced (Marsden & Oakley, 1990). It is broadly similar to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) concepts of first and second-generation evaluation as measurement and description. The evaluation process is recognised as a scientific and technical mechanism of enquiry with the emphasis placed on the use of quantitative techniques to achieve this objectivity e.g. surveys and questionnaires. The approach deals almost exclusively with the objective and visible parts of a project such as technical, organisational or financial questions and relies on the opinions of a limited number

of people who tend to be externally motivated and driven. Credibility and procedure are critical issues within these types of approaches with an emphasis on standardised achievement, testing and performance indicators for centralised accountability (Green, 1994).

The aim of this approach is to provide objective judgements. It is based on the recognition of evaluation as a specialisation and emphasises the role of the professional evaluator (Reason, 1994). The evaluator is expected to know the full range of available instruments so that any variable selected for investigation has the potential to be measured. The approach places the evaluator outside and separate from the subjects of the research, striving for objective measures of reality. It also as an evaluation approach tends to monopolise knowledge in the hands of a limited range of people (Reason, 1994).

3.6.1.2. The 'post-positivist' evaluation approach

The 'post-positivist' approach moves away from the pure positivist approaches. It is orientated around the issues of effectiveness, efficiency and accountability and is broadly related to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) third generation evaluation. It has a decision-making orientation and is focused on decisions, the decision-makers and on questions that relate to management, with methods selected in relation to the problems to be addressed. The 'post-positivist' approach represents a more utilisation-focused approach to evaluation which aims to provide support for efficient and effective management (Patton, 1990). It provides a mechanism for the examination of both performance and objectives. Examples of this approach include the goal-based approach (Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1978), the goal-free approach (Scriven, 1973) and the expert judgement-based approach (Stake, 1967). The goal-based approach measures performance against pre-defined goals, the goal free-approach measures performance without reference to any goals, while in the expert judgement based approach, an expert makes a subjective judgement about performance in relation to their particular skills and experience (Patton, 1990).

3.6.1.3. An analysis of 'positivist' and 'post-positivist' approaches to evaluation

The positivist and post-positivist approaches to evaluation have a number of drawbacks in relation to their application in the evaluation of rural community development. These drawbacks include a tendency towards managerialism (a favouring and acceptance of the views of management as paramount) with a subsequent failure to recognise the existence of other views among the various programme stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Other weaknesses stem from their assumption that there is a clear link between cause and effect. They tend to assume a 'smooth transition' between inputs and outputs. In reality, there is seldom a clear link between cause and effect particularly in the case of rural community development where there is a limited understanding of the complexities of the processes involved (Green, 1994).

Another assumption on which positivist type approaches are based, which raises difficulties when they are used in rural community development evaluation, is the assumption of the existence of 'commonly shared objectives'. In reality programme objectives and particularly social development objectives are often not explicitly stated, and where they are, they may not have been commonly agreed or may have changed over time. Where programme objectives are stated and accepted by evaluators this can have the effect of reinforcing the domination of existing power structures (Stern, 1987). The positivist type evaluation approach also tends to accept the terms of reference as given for an evaluation without questioning who it is that defines them, and whether they are relevant.

3.6.2. The 'constructivist' paradigm

Approaches conceived within the constructivist evaluation paradigm are based on idea that humans perceive the world differently and thus multiple realities can exist (Green, 1994). These approaches are oriented towards understanding the different ways in which programme stakeholders construct and understand reality. These approaches mark a move

away from the concept of an objective evaluation, (evaluation knowledge can no longer be regarded as objective if it is seen to emerge from the interaction between the evaluator and the project participants). They recognise evaluation as a mechanism for self study, discovery, learning and empowerment (Green, 1994: Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Evaluation approaches conceived in the constructivist paradigm are based on the belief that involving a range of stakeholders from the beginning, in defining the terms of reference and planning the evaluation process is an effective way of securing their commitment and ongoing participation. These approaches aim to examine the particular mechanisms by which a programme is implemented since according to Pawson and Tilley (1997) it is not programmes themselves that are important, it is the generative mechanisms that they release by way of providing reasons and resources to change behaviour. Constructivist approaches aim to provide all stakeholders with equal opportunities to participate in the evaluation process, through generating inclusive processes, which focus on degree of momentum achieved, rather than on particular outcomes.

Practical applications of this type of approach to evaluation include: Co-operative Inquiry, Stakeholder Evaluation[6] (Kushner, 1996), Responsive Evaluation (Stake, 1975), Illuminative Evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) (Chambers, 1995), Participatory Evaluation, (Quinn Patton, 1997), Empowerment Evaluation (Fetterman *et al.* 1996) and Self-Evaluation/Auto Evaluation (Kushner, 1996).

[6] The stakeholder approach is based on the notion that everyone who can be said to have an interest in the outcomes of the evaluation should be involved and have the opportunity to help phrase evaluation questions.

3.6.2.1. The 'interpretivist' evaluation approach

The 'interpretivist' concept of evaluation conceived within the constructivist paradigm emerges from a more pluralistic view of the world. Kushner (1996) views it as a form of sceptical realism based on the acknowledgement of the existence of multiple realities. Put differently, what something appears to be depends very much on who is looking at it, and how, and when (Kushner, 1996). The interpretivist approach promotes a pluralism in evaluation contexts and a case study methodological orientation with an accompanying reliance on qualitative methods.

3.6.2.2. The 'constructivist' evaluation approach

The constructivist evaluation approach which represents a particular application of the constructivist paradigm is participatory based. The underlying principle of the approach is 'the importance of listening to people, learning from them and with them, and working with them to develop projects/programmes that will help them to meet their needs and aspirations' (Wallace, 1994, p.3). The approach is based on the belief that to approach evaluation 'scientifically' is to miss its fundamentally social, political and value oriented character. It approaches the value problem in evaluation by involving all stakeholders in shaping evaluation questions, in the so called 'stakeholder evaluation approach' (Krogstrup, 1997). The concepts of authenticity and meaning therefore take on greater significance in the constructivist approach. Fernandez *et al.* (1991) for example, lay considerable emphasis within the approach on the importance of authenticity, arguing that knowing about a social setting is not equivalent to information obtained from and the meanings that might be attached to that information. What it is that constitutes legitimate data collection and data analysis techniques, is also considerably enlarged within the constructivist approach to include the use of creative expression (poetry, drama, mime, etc.) and creative investigative tools like posters, maps and map making, in addition to all the various more commonly used data collection techniques such as community meetings, interviews and observation (LeCompte, 1994).

3.6.2.3. An analysis of 'interpretivist' and ' constructivist' approaches to evaluation

Participation is central to the constructivist paradigm (Green, 1994). Constructivist and interpretivist evaluation approaches seek to explore project participants' experiential knowledge, acknowledge their values and in the process illuminate multiple perspectives and possible conflicts in a process that requires participation by all evaluation stakeholders (LeCompte, 1994; Santo Pietro, 1983). These approaches tend, however, to operate within a consensus model and therefore do not have solutions to the situation where the opinions of stakeholders are irreconcilable. They can also neglect value problems by assuring all programme stakeholders that they have equal status within the evaluation, even when they clearly do not within the overall context of a particular initiative (which is generally the case within rural community development) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A further difficulty with these types of approaches is that their successful application often necessitates changes in institutional and administrative control in order to ensure that programme participants have greater control over the development process. These types of changes in the structure of institutions require a high level of internal support that is not always forthcoming.

The constructivist type approach also often lacks the precise measurement required by some agencies, which expect definitive judgements defined by the traditional standards of validity and reliability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The concept of validity incorporates both internal and external validity. Internal validity relates to 'certainty about cause and effect' while external validity refers to 'the degree of confidence one has in generalising findings beyond the situation studied (Rossi, *et al.*1993, p.328). Reliability in contrast, has to do with consistency: 'a measure is reliable to the extent that the same results can be produced repeatedly, as long as the situation does not change' (Rossi *et al.* 1993, p.256). These traditional standards are, however largely inappropriate to any consideration of the constructivist approach given its inability to prove cause and effect and also the ongoing participatory nature and context specific nature of the processes involved, which effectively ensures evaluation results are both non-repeatable and non-transferable, although it is the case that the constructivist approach can be applicable in a whole variety of contexts (Robson, 1993).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have suggested the introduction of concepts such as credibility, fittingness, auditability and confirmability as appropriate tests to ensure the quality of the constructivist approach. Credibility according to Rossi *et al.* (1993), is a complex notion that includes the perceived accuracy, fairness and believability of the evaluation and the evaluator. Fittingness relates to the ability of the evaluation approach to adapt to the circumstances of a particular evaluation, while auditability relates to the ability of the approach to be successfully audited by an outside evaluator. Confirmability in contrast can be thought of as parallel to the conventional criterion of objectivity. It is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations and outcomes of inquiries are legitimate reflections of contexts and persons not just 'figments of the evaluator's imagination' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.236-237). It is the case, however, that an education process may be required before more conservative audiences are willing to accept and apply these tests of quality and accept constructivist and positivist approaches as equals which seek to serve different purposes. In addition, an over-emphasis on the constructivist approach could lead to a failure to recognise the limits of local knowledge and awareness and the need for skilled analysis of community problems (Mosse, 1994).

The results of the application of these type of approaches generally take the form of detailed descriptions of situations, events and people, interactions and observed behaviour and direct quotations from people about their experiences, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes. Data is commonly presented in a variety of ways. These outcomes require a significant amount of additional interpretation, often by trained personnel, thereby lengthening the evaluation process, increasing the evaluation costs and introducing a further level of analysis (Green, 1994). The lack of methodological guidelines, structure and procedures within the constructivist evaluation approach can also cause difficulties, which left unchecked can lead to poor quality work. Particular difficulties include the substantial amount of time required

to implement this type of evaluation process and the amount and nature of the data produced, only a small proportion of which is often used within the evaluation (Robson, 1993). The approach also tends to be time consuming given the nature of the participatory process involved (Fetterman *et al.* 1996). It is also the case that the behavioural characteristics of a group such as a rural community are not generally arithmetical aggregates of the individual parts (Padaki, 1996). It is important therefore that opinions be collected from as representative a sample as possible.

The constructivist type evaluation approach can be applied at a variety of levels and results can be presented either chronologically or thematically (House, 1990; Stake, 1978). This enables everything from the personalities of project participants to the views of persons far removed from the programme to be portrayed, thereby potentially lending power and utility to the findings of the analysis (Quinn-Patton, 1997). The process orientated nature of this type of evaluation approach, however, has the effect of changing the programme under evaluation with a subsequent requirement for critical reflection on the effect and role of the evaluation and evaluator within the overall process of programme development (Quinn-Patton, 1997).

Advocates of the constructivist type evaluation approach maintain that the methods employed for data gathering are less intrusive than other approaches. Chambers (1992; 1983) goes so far as to argue that information collected at community level directly is likely to be more reliable and relevant to the community than that generated by conventional social research. This has yet to be conclusively proved; what is clear is that these approaches can certainly provide an important mechanism for self-study and community learning. House (1980) is of the opinion that these approaches have the potential to be persuasive, accurate, coherent and representative of diverse views in complex situations and, as such, can be seen to be particularly suited to the evaluation of rural community development. These approaches are also concerned with the utility of findings to a variety

of audiences with a focus on process events as well as on collection of data about outcomes and summative results (Quinn-Patton, 1997).

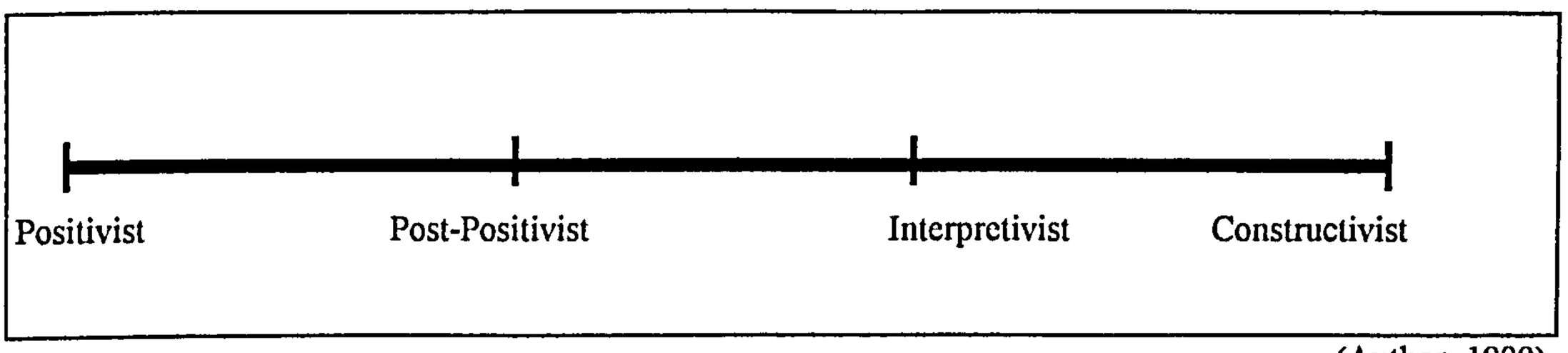
The danger with this type of approach for rural community development is that the meanings associated with the concepts of participation, self-determination and empowerment all tend to be positive and therefore are often accepted without question under the constructivist paradigm (Green, 1994). The concept of participation, while central to the approach can be applied in a number of ways. Any consideration of the constructivist type evaluation approach must examine the nature of participation involved in order to determine whether a particular approach is 'participative' or merely creates 'a sense of participation'. Participative approaches seek to actively engage, whereas approaches that create a sense of participation seek participation in order to be seen to be participative.

Other concerns in relation to the nature of participation include the issues of fairness and competence. In order for participation to be considered fair, all the various stakeholders should take part on an equal footing. In reality, stakeholders seldom have equal power and very often indirect power disrupts the ideal situation (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). Some stakeholders are more powerful than others and are able to set the agendas. Thus, the issue of how different stakeholders can be treated equally within an evaluation is a complex one which needs careful thought and can depend to a large extent on the awareness and skills of the evaluator. Stakeholders need to be provided with equal opportunities to speak and raise questions. This is necessary in order to ensure the variety of different stakeholder viewpoints are considered within the evaluation thereby enabling the development of a programme within a relatively short time (Daqqa, 1992). Competence in contrast relates to a concern for competent social operations (Webler, 1995). In order for participation to be competent it should enable participants to protect their own interests while also being capable of contributing (Webler, 1995).

3.6.3. The differences between evaluation approaches

In practice the distinction between the different evaluation approaches is somewhat blurred. An increasing number of practical evaluation approaches and models incorporate elements of the two main paradigms. For example the recent evaluation of the Irish LEADER I Programme sought to combine positivist and constructivist approaches (Kearney *et al.* 1994). A better way of understanding the relationship between different approaches is therefore to conceive a discrete continuum with the positivist approach at one end and the constructivist at the other. The various intermediate evaluation approaches are located on different parts of the continuum between the two extremes. Their exact location will depend on the way in which knowledge is constructed with a particular approach. Figure 3.4 outlines this continuum of evaluation approaches.

Figure 3.4. A continuum of evaluation approaches



(Author, 1999)

3.6.4. The selection of a particular evaluation approach

The selection of a particular evaluation approach is a function of its purpose, the process by which it is to be implemented, the role of the commissioning body, the identity and commitment of those involved, and the timing and funding available and the use to which the evaluation will be put. Other important criteria relate to the nature of the project to be evaluated and the identity of the evaluator. The decision to apply a particular approach must therefore be understood in terms of the institutional setting and political context with different approaches serving different purposes (Stern, 1995; Gregory & Martin, 1994).

3.7. AN OUTLINE OF EVALUATION APPROACHES USED WITHIN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Evaluations of rural community development have tended to be conducted in the context of a positivist paradigm that emphasised scientific as opposed to lay knowledge. For example the most commonly used evaluation approach within rural community development is a goal-based 'top down', internally commissioned, externally motivated, management centred approach which focuses on assessing value for money and determining accountability (Duran *et al.* 1995; Gregory & Martin, 1994; House, 1990). One example commonly in use is the goal-based approach that aims to determine whether a programme has achieved its stated goals and objectives. It pinpoints programme achievements and relates these to project interventions thereby addressing questions of accomplishments and causality through an assessment of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact, in what Ross and Freeman (1982) term a 'project impact model'. One of the best known applications of this model is the 'Log frame' analysis approach used by a variety of organisations, including the European Commission, to evaluate the impact of its programmes. Log frame analysis involves the use of a series of pre-specified indicators to determine whether and to what extent the stated goals; purposes, outputs and activities of a particular project of programme have been achieved. An example of a modified version of the goal-based evaluation for rural community development is the evaluation of the Irish LEADER I Programme (Kearney *et al.* 1994).

Other examples of the positivist evaluation approaches used within rural community development include the decision making approach, an approach based on expert judgement, and a systems/goal-free approach. The goal-free approach concentrates on determining effects, both intended and unintended, of a particular intervention in the terms of those most directly affected (Scriven, 1972). This approach depends upon the evaluator being both an 'outsider' and an 'expert' capable of determining the standards against which the effects identified will be assessed. The decision-making evaluation approach in contrast focuses on decisions and the decision makers as the main elements in developing the evaluation design, while the expert judgement approach relies on the judgement and

presence of a team of evaluators or an individual evaluator who possesses credibility due to their knowledge and experience in a particular field.

All of these positivist evaluation approaches focus on measuring, describing and judging the effectiveness of physical outcomes (Marsden & Oakley, 1991). They concentrate on the evaluation of the objective, the visible and the verifiable parts of a particular project/programme. They focus on contextual, technical, organisational and financial issues rather than capacity development and empowerment issues, which are more difficult to identify. They also depend upon the opinions of a limited number of individuals and are generally externally motivated and driven.

The early 1980s marked the beginning of a move away from positivist approaches toward the adoption of more participatory-based evaluation approaches. The emphasis within evaluation moved from measurement, through programme evaluation and judgement towards a recognition of the need for the adoption of more constructivist evaluation approaches which sought to recognise and include the different and often divergent views, values and opinions of all programme stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A range of participatory approaches[7] conceived within the constructivist paradigm developed, which had relevance for rural development and rural community development (McPherson, 1994; Howes, 1989; Potten, 1989). The differences between these approaches reflect their varying purposes and the differences in emphasis placed on participation.

Evaluation approaches within rural community development generally use a combination of methodologies and techniques (see section 3.8). The selection of the particular combination is a function of the purpose of the evaluation purpose and the attitudes of the evaluator and the evaluation stakeholders. They can very crudely be characterised in terms of either a predominantly 'positivist' approach or a predominantly 'constructivist' approach. In

[7] These approaches are used to feed into the evaluation approach developed by the author in Chapter 4.

reality, the differences between these approaches is less pronounced than in the past, given that many evaluation approaches now seek to combine methodologies in a more balanced way (Goetz & LeCompte, 1991; Jaeger, 1988; Reichardt & Cook, 1979). Constructivist principles can also be incorporated into more traditional positivist evaluation approaches to make them more participatory and vice versa. Figure 3.5 outlines the main characteristics of the positivist and constructivist approaches to the evaluation of rural community development.

Figure 3.5. Characteristics of rural community development evaluation approaches

Characteristics of the traditional dominantly 'positivist' approach	Characteristics of the dominantly 'constructivist' type approach
Project participants/ the community is generally the object of the evaluation together with the outcomes of the programme (Gregory & Martin, 1994).	Project participants/ the community are both the objects & the subjects of the evaluation. As subjects they must be provided with an opportunity to identify the terms of reference of the evaluation.
Focuses on examining and measuring outcomes (Patton, 1997).	Focuses on examining both outcomes and processes. Seeks to become a process within a process and is therefore a form of development intervention (Marsden & Oakley, 1990; Santo Pietro, 1983).
Relies on the involvement of a limited number of individuals (Robson, 1993).	Participation of all stakeholders is central. Stakeholders should be involved in a number of different stages in the evaluation process which include consultations prior to the evaluation, formulation of the terms of reference for the evaluation, data collection, interpretation of data and making of recommendations, and utilising evaluation information.
Tends to be management orientated: providing a retrospective review of what has happened in order to consolidate ongoing development or re-direct future developments by measuring success and failure (Patton, 1987).	Recognises evaluation as a learning process of value to the whole project community. It monitors fairness within and between communities (Mithaug, 1996). It can also serve as a mechanism of empowerment (Stern, 1995; VanderPlatt, 1995; McPherson, 1994).
Preordinate evaluation design. Uses 'objective' or outside expert's criteria of success (McCarthy et al. 1995).	Emergent design in response to stakeholders' needs. Seeks to valorise local people's criteria of success (Midmore, 1997; Venus, 1995).
Tends to be judgmental, focuses on cause & effect.	Tends to be developmental. Acts as a mechanism for uncovering conflict and project planning.
Seeks objective verifiable outcomes and aims to provide tangible results for policy makers.	Seeks to explore the dynamics of change and further understanding of the process of change.
Generally tends to be more cost effective and produce more timely outcomes.	Expensive and time consuming processes.
Focuses on objective knowledge derived through 'neutral' information collection and analysis.	People focused: focuses on subjective knowledge of insiders.
Functions within existing power structures.	Questions existing power structures and relationships.
Usually undertaken by outsider/s (i.e. external to the programme) and generally funded by outside development agency/agencies who commission the evaluation.	The process is generally facilitated by an outsider in collaboration with project stakeholders. The extent of collaboration depends upon the attitudes & behaviour of both the stakeholders & evaluator.

(Author, 1999)

The two evaluation paradigms have clearly different purposes. Approaches conceived within the positivist paradigm seek to support the management and to supply information to policy makers, while approaches conceived within the constructivist paradigm seek to support the whole project community through the provision of ongoing opportunities for community learning and empowerment. Positivist approaches focus on outcomes while constructivist type approaches focus on the processes involved in the implementation of the project. The choice of which evaluation approach is used is determined largely by the purpose of the evaluation. In an ideal situation a comprehensive evaluation should combine positivist and constructivist type approaches and methodologies, but in reality this is seldom the case given the extensive nature of the resources that would be required and the often quite specific purposes of the commissioning organisation.

3.7.1 Towards the implementation of the 'constructivist' type approach for the evaluation of rural community development.

The suitability of the two evaluation paradigms to evaluate empowerment orientated rural community development were reviewed in relation to the challenges posed by rural community development (outlined earlier in this chapter in section 3.2). Figure 3.6 details the main findings of this assessment.

Figure 3.6. A review of the ability of 'positivist' and 'constructivist' type evaluation approaches to meet the challenges posed by rural community development

The challenges posed by rural community development	Ability of positivist approaches to address challenges	Ability of constructivist approaches to address challenges
Complex and multi-dimensional process.	Focuses on measuring outcomes.	Focuses on processes.
Long term development approach that creates tangible and intangible outcomes. The intangible outcomes are difficult to identify, measure and evaluate.	Tends to focus on the tangible outcomes.	Focuses on the more intangible outcomes, some of which will occur in the longer term. Recognises evaluation as a learning process and as a mechanism of empowerment.
Dependent on local participation.	Involves a limited number of people.	Participation of stakeholders in a number of different stage in the evaluation process is central.
The outcomes are context specific.	Seeks objective verifiable outcomes and aims to provide results for policy makers.	Seeks to explore the dynamics of change and further understanding of the process of change.
The programmes under evaluation tend to be small scale.	Generally more cost effective and produces more timely outcomes.	Expensive and time consuming processes which focus on the individual and therefore work best at a local level.
Often developed on an ad hoc basis.	Tends to be management orientated measuring success and failure.	Recognises evaluation as a learning process, seeks to maximise learning opportunities rather than measure success or failure in relation to preordained objectives.

(Author, 1999)

This analysis indicates that the evaluation of rural community development, with its emphasis on social change and empowerment is more suited to constructivist type evaluation approaches. A decision has therefore been made for the purposes of this research to adopt and explore the potential of the constructivist type participatory approach for the evaluation of rural community development. This decision is supported by the knowledge that what needs to be known about a particular rural community development initiative is generally dispersed across that particular local knowledge system which the participatory based constructivist approach maximises the opportunities to explore (Bopp, 1995). The involvement of the various different stakeholders in the constructivist evaluation approach

also offers an opportunity to examine the context of a particular rural community development initiative, which is not generally considered within positivist approaches.

The emphasis on community wide participation ensures the constructivist approach avoids many of the more common assumptions of other approaches. These include assumptions that the stated objectives of a particular programme are either actual objectives or are shared by all those involved; and that they benefit all involved (Feuerstein, 1986). The use of constructivist approaches in the evaluation of rural community development is relatively recent, originating largely in the context of overseas development, where they aimed to respond to a wider range of issues and concerns held by project participants, thereby seeking to legitimise their experiences and knowledge. The ultimate goals of such an evaluation are the development of a better understanding of project operations, and the promotion of stakeholder learning and empowerment (Chambers, 1992).

The use of constructivist approaches in the evaluation of community development is relatively recent, originating largely in the context of overseas development, where they aimed to respond to a wider range of issues and concerns held by project participants thereby seeking to legitimise their experiences and knowledge (Morris & Copestake, 1993). The ultimate goals of such an evaluation are the development of a better understanding of project operations, and the promotion of stakeholder learning and empowerment. The success of this type of approach rests on a number of factors. These factors are critical for without them the participatory approach is little more than a process of information extraction within the rhetoric of political correctness. The remainder of this section examines these factors listed below in some depth.

- The role and quality of the participation involved.
- The role of the evaluator,
- Methodological issues related to the evaluation of the complex processes of rural community development.
- A clear recognition of the limitations of the approach.

4.6.1.1. The role of participation

Participation is central to the constructivist evaluation approach in the same way that rural community development is dependent on the active and ongoing local involvement. The success of the constructivist evaluation depends on the active and ongoing participation of all the various different stakeholder groups involved in the rural community development initiative under evaluation. There are many different definitions and types of participation.[8] There is a considerable confusion as to what it is, so the term can easily be manipulated. What is clearly needed therefore is a mechanism for distinguishing participatory approaches from other evaluation approaches that incorporate some participatory elements. It is important therefore to define the nature and degree of participation required for an evaluation to be considered participatory. Padaki (1996) identified the following series of questions in order to distinguish between different levels of participation:

- Is the evaluation participatory at the level of tools and techniques used?
- Is the evaluation participatory at the level of involvement of the stakeholders?
- Is the evaluation participatory at the level of empowerment of all the stakeholders?
- Is participation an end or a means to an end? (If it is a means, then to what end?)
- Is the participation oppressive?
- Are the ends of the evaluation pre-determined? (if so is real self-determination possible?)
- Does the intervention provide real participation or simply a 'sense of participation'?

It is only through addressing these questions that it is possible to determine how participatory a particular approach is. A number of different levels of participation can be identified:

1. Uses participatory tools and techniques only.
2. Involves participants in the planning and ongoing development of an evaluation.
3. Stakeholders are encouraged and facilitated to such a level that they are able to design and implement the evaluation, with or without outside support.

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[8] See Arnstein's (1971) - participation typology or Oakley & Marsden's, (1984) identification of seven different meanings of the concept.

The majority of participatory evaluations use participatory tools and techniques only. Meanwhile a small but growing number are beginning to move into the second category while evaluations that fall into the third type are rare (Rebein, 1996). Rebein (1996) argues that in order for an approach to be considered participatory, stakeholders should participate in at least three stages in the evaluation process: designing terms of reference, interpreting data, and using evaluation information. This argument for the need to involve programme stakeholders in at least three stages of the evaluation process together with consideration of the level of participation provides an effective mechanism by which to determine the quality and nature of participation involved. This mechanism will be used to assess the quality of participation throughout the remainder of this research.

3.6.1.2. The role of the evaluator

The evaluator acts in a similar way to an anthropologist using an intuitive approach to data collection and interpretation in the participatory evaluation approach (Quinn-Patton, 1997). This can cause difficulties however in terms of the perceived credibility and subjectivity of the data included and excluded (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The solution lies in finding the balance between credibility at local level and wider credibility (Patton, 1990).

To initiate the evaluation process the evaluator must begin with explanations and seek the support (and where appropriate, the permission) of the various stakeholder groups. The evaluator needs to be aware of the dangers of raising false expectations and must therefore be honest and open about the potential outcomes of the process. The evaluator must be clearly aware of the limitations of the approach and of the dangers of being captured by one or other of the stakeholder groups. The evaluator needs to be explicit about whether he/she is eliciting information for external use, or are engaged in process leading to community action or both. He/she must also respect the opinions of the various stakeholders and ask their permission to document, remove and use information. (Anon, 1994).

The evaluator has a dual responsibility to advise the programme stakeholders on the appropriateness of different techniques for particular tasks and thereafter to ensure these techniques be applied in a rigorous way (Green, 1994). (The final decision as to which techniques are selected must rest with the programme stakeholders). The evaluator must also be methodical in terms of reporting the details of how the data was collected in order to enable others to judge the quality of the final outcomes of the evaluation. The evaluator should also ensure that the original diagrams and copies of reports remain within the programme (Anon, 1994).

The evaluator is expected to actively participate in devising and implementing the evaluation, to enable stakeholder participation. The evaluator also has an important role in building the learning capacity of organisations as part of the evaluation process (Stevenson, 1996). The evaluator is expected to facilitate those involved in the programme to conduct their evaluation rather than simply implement the evaluation. Fetterman (1995) considers this role as similar to that of a partner or critical friend. The evaluator takes on an advocacy role allowing participants to shape the direction of the evaluation, suggesting where appropriate ideal solutions to their problems and then taking an active role in making social change happen. The notion of the evaluator as advocate raises a number of questions about bias and credibility with the constructivist approach (Scriven, 1996).

The role of the evaluator in this approach is that of a negotiator, first among equals (*primus inter pares*). The evaluator hands over control of the evaluation process to stakeholders. The evaluator must, in addition, allow the timing and pace of a particular evaluation process to be governed by the local context. The success of the approach as a learning and empowerment mechanism is dependent on the expertise of the evaluator and their mastery of the skills and technical procedures required to facilitate this process (Useem & Chipander, 1991). The evaluator also has a role in ensuring representation of various stakeholder groups and an interpretative role in uncovering - with stakeholders - the basis for existing perceptions of reality that stakeholders may have. The evaluator must seek

to value the contributions of all project stakeholders equally, respecting the diversity of others views and approaches.

It is suggested that the evaluator adopt a position of 'empathic neutrality' (Patton, 1990). In adopting this stance the evaluator commits him/herself to understand the situation as it is, to recognise its complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge and to be balanced in reporting their findings. Neutrality does not mean detachment, however, and qualitative enquiry in particular can be seen to depend upon, use and enhance the evaluator's direct experiences and insights about those experiences, which can include learning by empathy. Empathy in evaluation is the detection of emotions manifested in the programme stakeholders which is achieved by evaluators becoming aware of similar or complementary emotions in themselves (Meyers, 1981). It involves being able to take and understand the stance, position, feelings, experiences and views of others. Another key personal characteristic of the evaluator is patience. The evaluator must be prepared to wander, to observe, to listen and to learn, not to interrupt, in order to ensure evaluation stakeholders are not intimidated by the presence of the evaluator (Chambers, 1992).

Evaluators also have a responsibility to address what Green (1996, p.540) terms the 'demands of scientific citizenship'. They must be prepared to 'position' themselves and subsequently articulate and defend this position. A particular evaluator's position is a reflection of their personal history and values and can be seen to affect their knowledge and understanding of a given context. The recognition by a particular evaluator of the extent of their influence is a challenge which requires considerable self-reflection on behalf of the evaluator (Barone, 1992). The evaluator must therefore develop a self-critical attitude and reflexive stance to order to become fully aware of their own effects upon the situation under study (Plowman *et al.* 1996). A good dose of scepticism and meticulous attention to detail are critical characteristics of this type of evaluator.

3.6.1.3. Consideration of the methodological problems which relate to the evaluation of rural community development

The long-term and multi-dimensional nature of rural community development raises difficult methodological issues. In many cases the effects of change are only visible in the longer term and there is consequently a danger that intermediate outcomes might be considered as final outcomes (Stern, 1987). Additionally, many of the outcomes of the processes particularly those relating to the development of the human resource base are, by their nature, intangible and therefore difficult to identify and examine.

The role of the evaluator in building trust and facilitating the participatory evaluation process is crucial (see section 4.6.1.2 for details). The capacity to adopt this stance is not uniform, however and the same evaluation methods may give different results if used by different people (Patton, 1990). It must also be remembered that project participants can tend to respond particularly well simply because an evaluation is taking place (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The evaluation of rural community development thus requires the innovative utilisation of both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, in order to examine both the process involved and the outcomes of a particular programme. The selection of techniques to be used must be determined by the programme stakeholders in collaboration with the evaluator.

3.6.1.4. Recognition of the limitations of the approach

There is a clear need for honesty on behalf all those involved in the evaluation but particularly in relation to the evaluator in order to ensure the limitations of the constructivist approach are fully identified and to avoid exaggerated claims and unrealistic expectations about what it can achieve (Guba & Lincoln, 1990). Not all questions can be answered through participatory evaluation; in particular questions of accountability, cost-effectiveness and the evaluation of technical and economic impacts need to be addressed through more conventional evaluation approaches (Green, 1994). Their evaluation necessitates the involvement and expertise of outside experts and cannot therefore be

adequately evaluated by programme stakeholders. Thus it may be necessary to combine particular evaluation approaches.

Stakeholders can invest considerable time in participatory evaluation in the expectation of high returns for their inputs. Evaluation, however, remains but a process, which may or may not lead to change, not a product in and of itself (Anon 1994). Evaluation also still tends to take place within existing power structures which are not easily changed and which can ultimately determine the fate of most evaluation recommendations. In order therefore to avoid disappointment, it is important that realistic expectations of the outcomes of the evaluation process are promoted by all those involved (Rebien, 1996). Participatory evaluation is also context bound; results can therefore only be used in relation to the specific context in which they were produced. They cannot be generalised to other structures and places. The effectiveness of an evaluation of a rural community development programme can be measured in terms of how it influences decision making by all the stakeholders with responsibility for future plans (Rugh, 1995). However, its influence is limited by both internal and external factors and in particular the external complexities of national and global problems can completely overwhelm its influence.

3.8. CONCLUSIONS: THE ADOPTION OF A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

'A prerequisite for carrying out a stringent evaluation is that the evaluation method applied matches the complex problem that is being evaluated' (Krogstrup 1997, p.20).
The evaluation of the diverse social, economic and cultural processes and outcomes of rural community development is a complex operation. These complexities are further compounded by the context specific and local nature of many rural community development programmes (Midmore, 1997). In addition, a whole series of methodological problems and issues can be seen to exist in relation to the evaluation of the processes involved in rural community development, particularly the social processes (Midmore, 1998). Democratic representation and the ethics, position and identity of the evaluator are

also increasingly important issues within any consideration of rural community development evaluation (Chambers, 1992).

Just as there is no single overarching approach to rural community development, it being a process with several possible end-points depending on a variety of circumstances, so there is no single approach to its evaluation (Midmore, 1997). There are a whole variety of approaches that can be used to evaluate rural community development. These can be located on a continuum somewhere between the pure positivist approach at one extreme and the pure constructivist approach on the other. The pure positivist approach emphasises the importance of outcomes and of measurement and description while the pure constructivist approach places increased emphasis on the processes involved and on the role of learning and empowerment.

The majority of rural community development evaluations that have taken place historically are located toward the positivist end of the scale. But there is increasing evidence, particularly in the context of Third World and overseas development, that evaluation has a role in promoting social action and empowerment through the adoption of a more participatory evaluation approach (Chambers, 1992). It is argued in this research, that the adoption of a participatory approach, which involves all the various stakeholders, can enhance the depth of understanding of the complexity of processes involved in a particular programme (Green, 1994). The adoption of a participatory approach can also complement the participatory, capacity building approach of rural community development thereby reinforcing the nature of the programme and enhancing the role of evaluation as a development tool.

The adoption of a more participatory based constructivist type approach to the evaluation of rural community development appears to have significant potential for the role of evaluation (Ray, 1997). The most suitable option in understanding the complexities of the processes involved in rural community development is increasingly being seen to be a

constructivist approach with a blend of constructivist and positivist methodologies in what LeCompte (1994) terms 'the idea of sensible matchmaking'. The evidence from overseas development suggests the adoption and practice of a more participatory evaluation approach facilitates a more in-depth understanding of development processes (Narayan, 1993). The adoption of a participatory process can be seen to provide a mechanism for examining the multiplicity of rural community development objectives and for representing the multiple interests of all the various stakeholders involved. It also offers an opportunity to further utilise the internal resources of a programme in terms of local knowledge and skills. It thereby offers exciting potential for the development of a better understanding of the complexities involved in the processes of rural community development (Midmore, 1997).

The potential for the adoption of a participatory approach for the evaluation of rural community development clearly needs further exploration particularly in a European context. Chapter 4 develops a participatory framework for the evaluation of rural community development that is orientated towards the more constructivist end of the positivist-constructivist continuum, based on a number of principles which include a flexible methodology which combines quantitative and qualitative methods with a primary focus on the involvement of those most directly effected by a particular programme. Given that there is no ultimate mechanism with which to measure the effectiveness of rural community development, the potential of evaluation as a tool will be realised only through its application. The participatory framework developed in Chapter 4 will be implemented in Chapters 5, 6 & 7 in order to examine its role and potential and the potential of participatory approaches in general, both for rural community development evaluation and for rural community development.

CHAPTER 4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a participatory framework for the evaluation of rural community development. This chapter draws on the examination in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of what it is that constitutes rural development and rural community development respectively. This chapter also builds on the examination in Chapter 3 of the various different approaches by which rural community development can be evaluated and the identification of participatory approaches as a particularly suitable approach to rural community development evaluation. This chapter develops a participatory evaluation framework that can be used to evaluate rural community development programmes in a western European context.

Section 4.2 identifies the over-arching aims of the participatory evaluation approach within rural community development. Section 4.3 contains an outline of the various research methods/techniques that can be used within participatory evaluation framework. Section 4.4 outlines how the specific participatory evaluation approach used within this research was developed. The various mechanisms used to develop the participatory evaluation framework (PEF) included a review of existing participatory approaches to rural community development (in the absence of participatory rural community evaluation approaches) and an analysis of a series of interviews with rural development evaluators. The synthesis of both of these analyses enabled the identification of a series of good practice criteria for participatory evaluation. These criteria together with the research techniques outlined in Section 4.3 form the basis for the development of the 15 stage PEF outlined in section 4.5.

4.2. THE AIMS OF THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION APPROACH WITHIN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The main aims of the participatory evaluation include promotion of collaboration between participants; solution of problems; generation of knowledge and learning opportunities; release of creativity and empowerment of participants (Narayan, 1993). Rural community development also poses a series of unique challenges (reviewed in some detail in Chapter 3 for participatory evaluation.

The participatory evaluation approach aims to achieve these objectives through the active and ongoing involvement of project participants in the different stages of the evaluation process from planning and implementation to interpretation and analysis through a process of negotiation and dialogue (Narayan, 1993). The approach seeks to ensure that each stage of the evaluation process is a learning experience for all those participating in the evaluation process. Participatory evaluation aims to change behaviours and change the patterns that underlie those behaviours (Ramage, 1997). The type of learning involved is therefore based on Argris and Schon's (1978) concept of double loop learning that moves beyond simple first order learning, a cycle of plan-do-reflect, to build in consideration of the criteria under which one is reflecting (in a process of learning to learn).

The participatory approach aims to focus particularly on the identification and assessment of the key processes involved in rural community development. These processes include participation and capacity building. It is also the case that through the ongoing involvement of project participants in the evaluation process, the participatory approach aims to make a contribution to these ongoing development processes.

The approach seeks to make the community the centre of the evaluation process, providing for greater local control over the evaluation process. The purpose of this ongoing involvement and participation is to empower people (Rebien, 1996). The evaluator is thus involved in a collaborative venture with the different stakeholders.

In general terms participatory evaluation aims to;

i) Promote collaboration between participants (through a process of negotiation and dialogue identifying and exploring different individual and group which may camouflage processes);

ii) To release creativity and promote increased levels of confidence and empowerment among participants;

iii) To generate knowledge and learning opportunities (through the promotion and improvement of dialogue and understanding among participants and through the provision of a mechanism through which individuals are sensitised to certain questions);

iv) To solve problems through a collective approach (through the facilitation of better co-operative and critical decision making).

Figure 4.1 summarises these aims of the participatory evaluation approach in general and the aims of the participatory approach within rural community development in particular. Figure 4.1 also indicates how these aims relate to the challenges posed by rural community development (outlined in Chapter 3).

Figure 4.1. The relationship between the aims of participatory evaluation and the aims of participatory evaluation within rural community development

General Aims of the Participatory Evaluation Approach	Aims of Participatory Evaluation within Rural Development	The Rural Community Development Challenge/s Addressed
• To promote collaboration between participants • To release creativity and promote empowerment	To make the community the centre of the evaluation and the evaluation process	Contributes to an increased understanding of the complexities involved Recognises that development depends upon local participation to meet local needs Identifies and examines the complexity of processes involved
• To generate knowledge and learning opportunities • To promote collaboration between participants • To release creativity and promote empowerment	To maximise the involvement of participants (in at least three stages of the evaluation process) To ensure each stage of the evaluation process facilitates learning and empowerment of the various participants	Recognises that outcomes are dependent on context-specific factors and seeks to identify these factors through maximising opportunities for local participation Recognises the importance of the intangible outcomes and aims to contribute to these outcomes particularly empowerment, capacity building, & participation
• To solve problems • To generate knowledge and learning opportunities	To identify individual & group ideologies, which may camouflage processes	Contributes to an increased understanding of the complexities involved in rural community development
• To generate knowledge and learning opportunities	To determine project participants' needs & whether these needs are met	Recognises that rural community development depends upon local participation to meet local needs
• To solve problems	To empower participants contributing to levels of self esteem and self confidence	Recognises rural community development as a long term development approach and aims to contribute to this process through facilitating participation Recognises the important of the intangible outcomes and aims to contribute to these outcomes

4.3. A REVIEW OF EVALUATION TECHNIQUES/METHODS

There is a range of different techniques that can be used to undertake evaluations of all types. Participatory approaches generally use a combination of techniques. Among the most commonly used research techniques are analysis of secondary data; participant observation; the use of key informants; semi-structured and group interviews; participation in local activities; questionnaires; focus groups; triangulation and reflexive journals. Other more unique participatory techniques include brainstorming and workshops, transects and group walks, mapping exercises, aerial photographs, diagrams, calendars, ethno-histories and time lines (chronologies of events), stories, portraits and case studies, photographs and video, role playing, surveys and rapid report writing in the field (Gosling, 1995). The choice of which techniques are actually used within a particular evaluation is a function of the purposes of the evaluation, the nature and extent of the information required, the level and extent of resources available to undertake the evaluation, the attitudes of the participants and the preferences of the evaluator (Gosling, 1995). Rural community development evaluation generally involves the examination of a range of different issues and so a comprehensive evaluation will generally require the use of a number of different research techniques. Certain techniques have certain strengths for certain purposes.

Traditionally evaluation techniques were classified as either quantitative or qualitative. A less prescriptive and thus more useful categorisation for purposes of rural community development evaluation is Krippendorf's (1980) distinction between data types. Krippendorf distinguishes between two types of data, emic and etic. Emic data are data that arise in a natural or indigenous form and are only minimally imposed by the evaluator or the research setting, for example numbers of fields or people. Etic data, in contrast, represents the evaluators imposed view of the situation, the findings of participant observation. This categorisation of data (as opposed to a categorisation of research techniques) is useful as it enables different evaluation techniques to be mapped on a continuum (rather than arbitrarily

classified as quantitative or quantitative). Some methods are closer to the emic side and others closer to the etic side. Neither data type is better that the other; they are simply different and therefore complement one another. The remainder of this section examines both the strengths and weaknesses of the types of data generated by some of the main techniques used within rural community development evaluation.

4.3.1. Review of Secondary Data: Document Analysis

Existing documents published and unpublished in the form of minutes of meetings, annual reports, internal reports and other publications can provide a valuable source of readily accessible information, particularly in relation to the context of a particular action (Erlandson *et al.* 1994). The information necessary to undertake this type of analysis can be collected in an unobtrusive way, while the fixed and permanent form of the data also means that it can be subject to re-analysis and replication studies. The analysis resulting from the use of this technique is particularly useful in providing a longitudinal dimension to a study (Fetterman, 1989). This technique is also very useful in multi-method studies and is particularly useful for triangulation purposes. The main difficulty with this approach is that it is indirect and unstructured and therefore very difficult to use to assess causal relationships. Analysis is also based on information collected for a purpose other than the evaluation, thereby introducing a series of biases that it may be difficult to identify (Robson, 1993). The documents available may also provide only limited or partial information.

4.3.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation seeks to explain the meaning of the experiences of the observed through the experiences of the observer (Robson, 1993). This desire for closeness to the observed derives from the assumption 'that the inner states of people are important and can be known' (Patton, 1997, p.283). A key feature of this approach is that the observer seeks to become a member of the observed group in a way that involves both physical presence and a sharing of experiences. The observer learns the social conventions, habits, and verbal and non-verbal language, in order to fit in and to establish some role within the

group (Foote Whyte, 1984). The observer must also exercise a non-obtrusive research style, in order to cause minimal disturbance to the subjects under investigation given that according to the Heisenberg principle the mere act of observation can influence outcomes (Foote Whyte, 1991).

Among the strengths of the participant observation approach for rural community development evaluation is that it enables the evaluator to experience the unfolding of ongoing organisational processes and decisions, rather then simply focus on the outcomes of these processes. It also provides an opportunity for the evaluator to discuss events with participants as they occur and before they have had time to forget or reconstruct them (Foote Whyte, 1991). Using participant observation, the evaluator also has an opportunity to place individuals in a group context and thereby gain a better understanding of individual and group dynamics. This greater knowledge and awareness offers the evaluator an opportunity to uncover underlying trends that may not be immediately apparent or that participants may not be aware of. This in turn enables the evaluator to add depth to their understanding of the type and nature of the questions that need answering (standard research approaches often assume that the evaluator knows the important questions to be asked, which is not always the case) (Erlandson *et al.* 1993). Participant observation can therefore be seen to provide opportunity for unique learning not possible using other methods. Participant observation also offers the advantage of serendipity, opening up possibilities for encountering completely unexpected phenomenon that may be more significant that anything the evaluator could have foreseen. It also helps the evaluator sort out relevancies from irrelevancies and determines whether an atypical action/event is important within the overall context of the evaluation (Erlandson *et al.* 1993).

Participant observation can be overt or covert. Many participant observers in the past have chosen a covert or semi covert role (where the observed are not made aware that they are the subject of a particular evaluators interest) in order to avoid influencing the social situation they were studying or negatively influencing their access to data (Foote Whyte, 1991). In overt participant observation in contrast, the fact that the observer is an observer

is made clear to the observed from the outset. This awareness of the role of the evaluator as observer while it undoubtedly has a more disturbing effect on the phenomena observed can prompt a group to reflect in a more analytical way on the way they operate (Adler & Adler, 1994). However, in a community-based study, covert and semi-covert roles are generally out of the question. Apart from the dubious ethics involved in covert research, community groups generally would not put up with interviews and observations for which no purpose is explained. Covert and semi-covert participant observation approaches tend to view the observed as the object rather than the subject of the study, and are therefore at odds with the empowerment based rural community development approach adopted within this study.

The difficulty with participant observation is that it is all too easily dismissed because it is so coloured by the evaluators' personality and values (Hockey, 1996). The extent and nature of the participation of the evaluator in the activities of the people being studied can indeed be shaped in part by the difference in cultural background, race, etc. between the evaluator and the study subjects. Where these difference are minimal, the evaluator may be accepted almost as a native. However, where differences are large, participation opportunities will be more limited (Foote Whyte, 1991). On the positive side, evaluators avoid dilemmas about how closely their behaviours should conform to that of the people being studied. Maintaining perspective is a difficult task for the evaluator, particularly as they learn to adjust to local culture and social practices and become immersed in the life of the community (Foote Whyte, 1984). The process of assimilation by its nature can mean that the evaluator takes more and more behaviour for granted (Adler & Adler, 1994). The danger for these evaluators is that they run the run the risk of turning from a non-participating observer into a non-observing participant. In this context, it is important for the evaluator to leave their research study areas for periods and where possible discuss their ongoing findings with their peers in order to help maintain perspective. Another important limitation of participant observation is the high cost in time. The evaluator avoids elaborate equipment but has to devote full time to the enterprise over an extended period. Often the first days/weeks in the field yield little data of lasting value and instead is taken up with acceptance, and beginning to understand what is going on (Robson, 1993).

4.3.3. Interviews

Interviews have a wide variety of forms. They can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Structured interviews (which are effectively questionnaires where the evaluator fills in the responses) are those where the evaluator asks the respondent a set of pre-identified questions with a limited set of response categories (Malhotra, 1993). There is generally little room for variation except where an open-ended question might be included. There is very little flexibility in this type of approach, with the evaluator playing a neutral role, never adding their opinions on the answers given by the respondent (Robson, 1993). This format can be seen to elicit rational responses but often overlooks or inadequately assesses the emotional dimension. Unstructured interviews in contrast tend to be qualitative in nature, opened ended and exploratory (Gosling, 1995). Questions within unstructured interviews tend to be open and the interview style is informal. The aim of the unstructured interview is to gain a better understanding of the complex behaviour of a particular group without superimposing any structure of research framework that might limit the investigation (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Semi-structured interviews fall somewhere between the two extremes. In the semi-structured format the evaluator has a clearly defined purpose, but has sufficient flexibility to change the wording or order of questions where appropriate. Powney & Watts (1987) also make a distinction between 'respondent interviews' and 'informant interviews'. In 'respondent interviews' the evaluator remains in control throughout the whole process and as such the interviews are necessarily structured to some extent by the interviewer. Both structured and semi-structured interviews are respondent type interviews. In 'informant interviews' the focus and the prime concern are the perceptions of the respondents as is the case in non structured interviews.

Interviews and questionnaires can be used to collect mainly emic data (leading to a better understanding of an individual or group perspective) and mainly etic data for measurement purposes. They can be formal or informal, and can occur as short one off events, or at the

other extreme they can take place over multiple lengthy sessions over days. The most common type, is the individual face to face interview (Malhotra, 1996). Other interview types include the group interview (i.e. involving more that one respondent) and the telephone interview. The group interview involves a systematic questioning of several individuals, and simultaneously provides a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interviews and is broadly similar to a small-scale focus group (see section 4.3.5) (Stewart & Shandasani, 1998).

The interview is a key evaluation technique providing a flexible and adaptable way of getting information that would be difficult to reach by other means (Malhotra, 1993).
One of the difficulties with interviews as a research technique is that they are time consuming, with considerable time involved in preparation, in the actual interview and in the interview write up. The quality of interviews and the resulting interpretation can as in other research methodologies, depend on the interview skills and to a large extent the identity of the evaluator, in terms of their cultural background, class, gender, age, status, etc (Erlandson *et al.* 1993). Interviewee behaviour can also cause problems particularly where the interviewee answers in such a way as to please the interviewer, or where the interviewee omits relevant information to hide something from the interviewee (Robson, 1993). The type of interview (face to face, telephone, etc) and the wording/language of the interview questions can also be the source of considerable confusion and misunderstanding. Other problems with interviews as an evaluation technique stem from ethical considerations surrounding the need to respect the confidentiality of key informants (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

4.3.4. Self-Completion Questionnaires

Self-completion questionnaires involve respondents answering a series of relatively straightforward generally closed questions, using pre-defined answers on a survey sheet (Gosling, 1995). The data collected by this technique tends to be etic in nature, focused on answering the questions, using the answers provided by the evaluator. The strength of this type of technique is that it provides an inexpensive and relatively easy to administer

mechanism by which large amounts of data can be gathered and quickly analysed through the use of computer coding and analysis packages like SPSS (Patton, 1997).

The difficulty with self-completion questionnaires relates to the fact that the data collected by this mechanism can tend to be superficial and limited (Carter & Delamont, 1996; Smith, 1975). The evaluator has no way of determining the factors affecting a particular individuals choice of answer (Robson, 1993). Self administered questionnaires also tend to have a low response rate; 30% is usually considered an acceptable return, while a 50% response rate would be considered good (Gosling, 1995). The self-selecting nature of the respondents, however, causes problems in relation to both the generalisability of data and the ability of this technique to engage the more difficult to reach target group within rural community development evaluation (Quinn-Patton, 1997).

4.3.5. Focus Groups

Focus groups generally consist of a group discussion of a topic that is the focus of the conversation. They generally involve 8-12 individuals who discuss a topic under the direction of a professional moderator, who promotes interaction and assures that the discussion remains focused (Sherman & Webb, 1988). They last from 1 ½ - 2 ½ hours (Gosling, 1995). The most common purpose of a focus group interview is to stimulate and explore in-depth a topic about which little is known (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). They are particularly suited for 1) quickly identifying qualitative similarities and differences in opinions and backgrounds between participants, 2) for determining the language participants use when thinking and talking about particular services and for suggesting a range of hypotheses about the topic of interest (Malhotra, 1993). Focus groups can be used throughout all stages of evaluation but are particularly useful in the early and exploratory stage of research where little is known about a particular topic/event/subject, providing the evaluator with substantial and in-depth data expressed in the participant's own words and context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Focus groups also provide a useful mechanism to

facilitate interpretation of large-scale survey results thus adding depth to the responses (Gosling, 1995).

Focus groups generally provide data that is closer to the emic side of the continuum in that they allow individuals to respond using their own categorisation and perceived associations. They are not however entirely devoid of structure because the evaluator does raise questions of one type or another throughout the process. The main strengths of focus groups lie in the fact that they provide a flexible mechanism whereby data can be collected on a range of topics with a variety of individuals and in a variety of settings, quickly and relatively inexpensively (less than the cost of individual interviews) with only a short lead in time necessary to set them up (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998).

Focus groups also enable the evaluator to interact directly with the participants and observe both their behaviour and their non-verbal responses that may confirm or on occasion contradict verbal responses. This interaction also provides opportunities for the evaluator to further clarify and probe responses as well as follow up enquiries. The focus group situation also enables participants to qualify their responses and to react to and build on the responses of other participants. The effect of this may be to create a synergy that results in the production of data that might not otherwise have been uncovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Focus groups can also be seen to provide the evaluator with large and rich amounts of data in the participant's own words.

The weaknesses of focus groups are the flip side of the strengths. The small numbers of participants for example significantly limit generalisation to larger populations. Additionally, those who are willing to participate in focus groups may be quite different from the population of interest (Quinn Patton, 1997). The interaction of participants with one another and the group facilitator can also limit the independence of individual participants, thereby reducing generalisability (Robson, 1993). A dominant member may also bias the results of a particular focus group. The live nature of the discussion

may also lead an evaluator to place more faith in the findings than might actually be warranted. The open-ended nature of the discussions can in addition often make interpretation of the findings difficult, given that statements are frequently qualified. An unskilled facilitator can also bias the findings by unknowingly providing cues about what types of responses and answers are desirable (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998).

4.3.6. Triangulation

Using a single research technique can have substantial advantages, in terms of simplifying the processes involved in a particular evaluation, but does not make any provision for the checking data or methodology reliability (Robson, 1993). One of the key factors in determining the strength of an evaluation can however be seen to depend on the ability of the study to stand up to rigorous examination (Erlandson *et al.* 1993). Research questions can and are generally more comprehensively tackled using more than one research technique (VanderPlatt, 1995). One of the main advantages of using multiple methods, is that it enables the use and practice of triangulation. Triangulation is originally a term used in surveying, as a method of determining the location of an objects, by getting a 'fix' on it from two or more places (Erlandson, *et al.* 1993). Triangulation in research terms involves using a multi-method approach to achieve broader and better results. This can be done using multiple sources of data (time, space, person), research techniques (observation, interview, survey), evaluator/s (single or multiple), or theory (single versus multiple perspectives of analysis). Data triangulation involves the collection of data, at different times, in different places and from different people, while triangulation involving the use of different techniques can take many forms but will involve the combination of at least two different techniques.

According to Lincoln & Guba (1989) each piece of information should be expanded by at least one other source, e.g. a second interview or source. Evaluator triangulation means that multiple as opposed to single evaluators are involved. Where evaluators report the same kind of observation, confidence in the data is increased. Theoretical triangulation is more complex and involves the use of several perspectives in the analysis of the same data set (Smith, 1975). The benefits of triangulation using multiple methods include the ability to

assess the plausibility and the extent of threats to validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The greater the convergence attained through triangulation of multiple data sources methods, evaluators or theories the greater the confidence in the observed findings. The use of multiple methods can also enhance interpretability in that it enables what Erlandson *et al.* (1993, p.139) describe as 'an expansion of meaning through overlapping, compatible constructions emerging from different vantage points'.

The difficulty with triangulation is that it is labour and resource intensive. The more methods of triangulation used the more expensive and the greater the time involved. In addition the greater the range and number of methods used, the greater the nature and range of data collected, some of which may compliment each other, others of which may contradict each other, leading to confusion and uncertainty (Quinn Patton, 1997). The key to effective triangulation is to use the minimum of different methods to enable the reliability and validity of different sources, techniques, evaluators and theories to be cross-checked (Smith, 1975).

4.3.7. Reflexive Journal/Diary

A reflexive journal, according to Lincoln & Guba (1985), is a type of diary in which the evaluator records information about himself or herself on a regular basis. The journal provides a record about the research schedule and progress, logistics, insights and reasons for methodological choices and decisions. The journal can be kept on a daily or on a weekly basis. The availability of such a journal supports not only the credibility but also the transferability and confirmability of the study (Robson, 1993). The usefulness of the journal is however completely dependent on the commitment of the evaluator to the complete the task in an honest and meaningful way on a regular basis (Erlandson, *et al.* 1993).

4.3.8 Process Observation

Participatory approaches also involve the use of a technique known as process observation, as a method of documenting, reflecting on and evaluating the implementation of PRA. Process observation involves ongoing reflection by the evaluator on the process of implementation of the evaluation. This ongoing observation can be seen to serve a number of purposes which include: ensuring the maintenance of the quality of the work; building the confidence of the evaluator; helping improve existing methods and promoting methodological innovation; helping to explore and ensure the accuracy, reliability and replicability of the information gathered (Narayansamy & Ramesh, 1996).

4.3.9. Participatory Techniques

Other more participatory techniques include workshops, transects and group walks, mapping exercises, aerial photographs, diagrams, calendars, and time lines (chronologies of events), stories, portraits photographs and video and role playing (Scoones & Thompson, 1994). Hope and Timmel (1984) describe workshops as a planned learning experience. Workshops can take place over anything from an hour to a whole day/evening and can range from a one off event to a series of events. They serve a variety of purposes from development, to problem posing to communication and provide a good mechanism for gathering and analysing information in a more informal group setting (Hope & Timmel, 1984). Transect and group walks in contrast involve the researcher walking with the research participants across the research area, noting and discussing objects and events as they occur. These are really only suited to very localised studies (Chambers, 1995). Mapping exercises in contrast involve the research participants mapping their area either on paper or in the form of a model. These exercises are useful in determining the local values placed on particular objects and places and are increasingly used as a mechanism whereby local communities can participate in a meaningful way in the planning process (Rhoades, 1992). Aerial photographs, diagrams, calendars, time lines (chronologies of events), photographs and video can also be used as mechanisms through which physical data can be collected. These techniques while useful, focus the interpretation of mainly physical evidence and actual

events rather that on the meanings that people associate with these objects and events and have as such a relatively limited use with rural community development (Phofl, 1986). Other more creative investigation tools include the use of posters, maps and map making, three dimensional symbols, pocket charts, self drawing, the collection of stories, and the practice of role playing. These techniques examine the meanings that people associate with particular events. They can, as Rhoades (1992) suggests,also be used for discussion purposes or indeed to explore gender differences. The problem with these techniques is that they require a substantial amount of subjective interpretation both by the different individuals involved and by the researcher. Moreover, they also really only suitable on a relatively small scale.

Some of the various research methods/techniques outlined in this section will subsequently be used within the Participatory Evaluation Framework outlined in Section 4.4.

4.4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Participatory rural community development evaluations are relatively rare in a western European context, although there are at least two proposals currently in preparation to undertake participatory evaluations in Scotland and England (Bryden *et al.* 1998; Ray 1998; Ray, 1997). This absence of proven participatory rural community development evaluation approaches within a western European context led the researcher to develop her own particular Participatory Evaluation Framework (PEF). The term 'PEF' is used in order to distinguish between the participatory evaluation approach developed within this research and other participatory evaluation approaches. The use of the term 'framework' also denotes the flexibility and open nature of the approach and avoids any use of the term 'model' with its prescriptive connotations.

The PEF was developed using the mechanisms outlined below:

1. A review of current participatory development approaches[9] used within rural community development. (These approaches have generally been applied within the context of overseas development. However, this section also reviews some more recent European applications of these types of approaches).

2. A series of interviews with evaluators involved in rural community development evaluation. This was done in order to identify key issues and good practices within rural community development evaluation.

4.4.1. A review of existing participatory approaches within rural community development

The participatory approach to development was first promoted in relation to education (Scrivinsan, 1981; Freire, 1972). It was introduced into overseas development aid in the mid 1970s in relation to health projects and gradually spread to other sectors including rural community development (Rebien, 1996). In parallel to this development of participatory approaches was the development of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA originated in the context of overseas development, from a growing awareness of the limitations of what Chambers (1983) termed 'rural development tourism' (the brief rural visit by the urban-based professional) and also out of farming systems research, more specifically out of the problems of how to classify farmers into homogeneous groups and identify key production constraints (Morris & Copestake, 1993). It quickly became apparent that this type of intermediate technology was appropriate to other aspects of rural development (Howes, 1994). The advantage of RRA was its ability to generate information in a short time, which could be used by development planners (Kashyap & Young, 1989). The general principles

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[9] Given that there are few if any examples of participatory evaluation approaches within rural community development, it was necessary to examine participatory approaches within rural community development in general.

of RRA are captured by the concepts of an optimal level of ignorance (not trying to find out more than is needed) and of appropriate imprecision (not trying to measure what does not need to be measured, or not measuring more accurately than is necessary for practical purposes) (Ilchman, 1972). It was not until the 1980s, however, that RRA become more widely recognised following its application and practice in a number of countries which include Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana and Tanzania (Chambers, 1992).

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is best described as a semi-structured process of learning from, with and by rural people about rural conditions. PRA developed from RRA, in response to the criticisms of RRA as a highly extractive process (Anon, 1994 & Howes, 1994). It differs from RRA in two key aspects: the roles of investigation are reversed (the community now teaches and learns); and rushing is replaced by rapport and relaxation. The term PRA itself was first used in Kenya to describe village level investigations, analysis and planning (Chambers, 1992). PRA represents a growing body of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions (Anon, 1994). PRA can in addition be seen to require substantial changes in the attitudes and behaviour of those facilitating its implementation. These critical changes include: changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the facilitator; respect for rural people; a genuine interest in what rural people know, say and show; patience; wandering around, not rushing and not interrupting. The PRA approach also necessitates facilitators' use of materials and methods which empower local people to express, share, enhance and analyse their knowledge (Chambers, 1992). PRA shifts the focus from the professional back to the community and it's involvement in the analysis and presentation of information in its own locale. It emphasises the political aspects of knowledge production and recognises knowledge as a significant instrument of power and control (Fals-Borda & Rhaman, 1991).

4.4.1.1. Application to Europe

A small number of participatory approaches have been used in the UK and Ireland, with PRA work conducted in East Berkshire (Craig & Barahona, 1996) and in North Derbyshire in relation to health issues (Weaver, 1996a). PRA work has also been undertaken by Age

Concern in South Armagh, by Scottish Participatory Initiatives in Edinburgh and by the Scottish Rural Development Programme in relation to local community involvement in forestry (Weaver 1996). Analysis of these applications of the participatory approach together with work by Wallace (1994) highlighted two key issues of relevance to the wider implementation of participatory approaches within a European context as follows:

The status of those conducting the study: with no compulsion or incentive for stakeholders to participate in participatory studies, those conducting such evaluations have no power to ensure participation. They are thus forced to set aside some additional time in order to develop a rapport and win the confidence and support of project participants. The implementation of these types of approaches has therefore tended to take considerably longer than originally anticipated.

The selection of appropriate methods: certain data collection methods are more appropriate than others in the context of their application in a western European context. Seasonal calendars for example, while they are extensively used in an overseas development context were not found to be particularly relevant in the context of many western European development programmes. Data collection methods must therefore clearly be carefully chosen in order to ensure local people can relate to them. The decision as to what methods are appropriate is dependent on the development of an understanding of local context.

4.4.1.3. The implications of participatory approaches to rural community development for the development of a participatory evaluation approach for rural community development

The practice and implementation of participatory approaches in general within rural community development clearly has much in common (in terms of the attitudes and behaviour required and in terms of the methods used and synergism involved) with the practical implementation of aims of the participatory evaluation approach outlined in Figure 4.1. There is undoubtedly considerable scope for the application of key PRA/RRA

principles and methods in particular, within the development of the PEF. Figure 4.2 summarises some of these general principles.

Figure 4.2. Some key general principles associated with the use of participatory approaches within rural community development

- The practice of optimising (which ties together the concepts of optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision), and involves relating the costs of learning to the useful truth of information, with trade-offs between quantity, relevance, accuracy and timeliness.
- Ensuring the community is facilitated to both learn and teach.
- The replacement of rushing around by rapport and relaxation to build trust with participants.
- The selection of appropriate methods and techniques which can be used flexibly, improvising where necessary.
- The uses of materials that empower local people to express share and analyse their knowledge.
- The practice of triangulation (using more than one and often three methods or sources to crosscheck data) helps to ensure the accuracy of data sources.
- The practice of critical self-awareness, on behalf of the evaluator/facilitator, who needs to constantly reflect on what is being seen and not seen, who is being met and not met, what is being said and not said, and includes the introduction of the practice of process observation.
- The need for the evaluator to critically reflect on his/her role within the evaluation process.

(Author, 1999 after Anon, 1994)

These key principles represent good practice in the application of participatory approaches and as such are used in the development of the PEF in Section 4.4.

4.4.2. Identification of good practice through interviews with rural development evaluators

In order to identify some of the central issues that need to be considered in the development of a participatory rural community development evaluation approach, the author conducted interviews with a number of evaluators. A total of five evaluators were interviewed during the period March 1996-April 1996. The interviewees were selected through a review of existing literature on evaluation and PRA and on the basis of the interviewee's expertise and

involvement in rural community development evaluation. All had considerable experience of undertaking rural community development evaluations, although at different levels. Two had direct experience of undertaking programme level evaluations of rural community development. One of these evaluators was based in Ireland, the other in Scotland. Another evaluator had direct experience of undertaking PRA exercises, while the remaining two had been involved more generally in policy level evaluations of rural community development. Figure 4.3 outlines the different types of evaluators interviewed.

Figure 4.3. Evaluators interviewed

Description of Each Evaluator	Location	Evaluation Locations	Experience of using Participatory Techniques & Approaches
1. A PRA Consultant	Scotland	Scotland, England & Overseas	Experienced in the use of both
2. A Policy Evaluator	England	England	No experience
3. A Policy Evaluator	Ireland	Ireland	No experience
4. A Programme Evaluator	Ireland	Ireland	Some experience of using participatory techniques
5. A Programme Evaluator	Scotland	Scotland	Some experience of using participatory techniques

With the exception of the PRA consultant, none of these evaluators had direct experience in the use of participatory approaches, although the two programme-level evaluators has some experience in the use of participatory techniques, including focus groups and workshops. This lack of direct experience among the majority of the evaluators interviewed is a reflection of the general lack of experience with participatory methods among western European rural community development evaluators.

The interviewees were each sent a short note outlining the research proposal and a number of key issues for discussion, prior to the interview (see Appendix 1 for details of the evaluation proposal sent to evaluation experts). The items identified for discussion included a number of broad issues relating to evaluation in general and a number of more specific issues that related to the research proposal in particular. These discussion issues were identified from an analysis of the challenges posed for evaluation by rural community development (identified in Chapter 3) and from the aims of the participatory evaluation approach (identified earlier in this chapter). Issues discussed included the open-ended nature of the participatory approach, the intangible nature of many of the outcomes to be evaluated, and the mechanisms for determining the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of an evaluation.

The interviews were semi-structured in their format and based around the issues identified in the introductory letter. The interviews also included discussion of a range of other issues raised by the interviewee. On average the interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. All the interviews were recorded and fully transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. The interviews were analysed and results categorised under the following headings:

- advice about undertaking evaluations generally;
- advice about using a participatory approach;
- advice about the identification and evaluation of intangible/process outcomes;
- the need for an emergent evaluation design and process;
- other issues.

4.4.2.1. The findings of the interviews

Analysis of the interviews found that there was a clear distinction between the attitudes of the interviewees. The PRA consultant and the two evaluators involved in programme level rural community development evaluations, were supportive or very supportive of the

participatory evaluation approach. The two policy level evaluators were more cautious in their support of the participatory evaluation approach and generally preferred the 'evaluation by objectives' approach. These two interviewees did, however, believe it would be interesting to combine the participatory approach with other evaluation approaches. One of the policy level evaluators preferred the use of the term 'stakeholder evaluation' instead of 'participatory evaluation' arguing that 'stakeholder evaluation' provided a more accurate description of the evaluation process than 'participatory evaluation'. It is interesting to note that this distinction between interviewees' level of support for the participatory evaluation approach directly reflected their level of experience in the use of participatory techniques and approaches, i.e. the more experienced the evaluator was in the use of participatory techniques and approaches, the more supportive they were of the participatory approach - an encouraging but unsurprising finding.

- Advice about undertaking rural community development evaluations

The interviewees identified a range of general issues that included the need for ongoing awareness and consideration of the context of the project and the context of the evaluation. All the evaluators identified the need for careful and ongoing consideration of the various external social, political, cultural and economic influences on both the programme under evaluation and the evaluation itself. One of the Irish evaluators identified the prospect of proposed changes to Irish local government structures, with significant rationalisation of the number of development agencies, as an example of an important external influence on ongoing rural development programmes and their evaluation. He argued that even the prospect of this reform would mean that many rural community development initiatives would be fearful for their future and therefore anxious to demonstrate results in order to ensure the continued existence of their organisation and position within that organisation. In this context, he argued it would be unlikely that the programme would relish the prospect of a critical evaluation.

Another important issue raised by all interviewees, particularly in relation to the evaluation of rural community development, was the need to use a range of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. The majority of interviewees recommended the use

of qualitative techniques given the intangible nature of many of the processes involved in rural community development. The interviewees also advocated the use of the concept of triangulation (using data from a number of sources, in order to ensure its accuracy). One interviewee suggested the use of at least three sources of data in order to maximise the accuracy of the data collection process.

Two other issues raised by interviewees were the related issues of expectations and feedback. The two policy level evaluators who were generally more sceptical about the participatory evaluation approach, were particularly concerned that participatory evaluation might raise unrealistic expectations among the various programme participants. They therefore advised the researcher to avoid raising unrealistic expectations about the outcomes of the evaluation, particularly given that the researcher would have no mechanism by which to ensure the implementation of the evaluation findings.

The question of feedback was raised by a number of interviewees, one of whom argued that evaluation utilisation depended to a very large extent on the nature, timing and extent of evaluation feedback. This interviewee was firmly convinced that one of the most important elements in the initial establishment of the evaluation was a joint discussion with project participants and subsequent agreement of the nature, form and timing of the feedback required by the participants. This view coincided with that of the PRA consultant who advised the researcher to present the evaluation findings to evaluation participants on an ongoing basis as part of the evaluation strategy.

- <u>Advice about using a participatory evaluation approach</u>

An issue raised by all the interviewees was the need to establish an inclusive process of participation. All the interviewees advised that all project participants/stakeholders be provided with ongoing opportunities for participation in all stages of the evaluation process. This in turn led interviewees to raise the question of identification of evaluation stakeholders. In the case of rural community development, this question expands to include consideration of what constitutes the community, who represents the community and what

motivates those who represent the community. The majority of interviewees identified these issues as critical if the approach is to foster participation.

The willingness of the evaluation stakeholders to participate in the evaluation process was identified as another crucial element in the successful implementation of the participatory approach, as was the involvement of all the stakeholders in the identification of the objectives of the evaluation. The success of the participatory approach was seen by many of the interviewees to depend on the incorporation of the objectives of the various stakeholder groups in the overall evaluation objectives. The interviewees also advised the researcher to be very aware of the danger of 'being hijacked' by one particular group and thereby running the risk of alienating other groups and jeopardising the overall evaluation.

- Advice about the evaluation of intangible/process outcomes

All of the evaluators interviewed identified the measurement and evaluation of the intangible outcomes, (e.g. increased levels of confidence and self esteem, increased levels of awareness and trust, levels of participation, etc.) particularly those which relate to the creation of social products, as the one of greatest challenges facing rural community development evaluation. Many of them spoke of their personal frustration at their inability to evaluate the intangible social process outcomes at anything more than a general level, particularly given the absence of ongoing monitoring and adequate baseline data.

The majority of the interviewees identified the key role of qualitative data collection techniques in the assessment of these intangible development outcomes, although no one was able to offer any practical advice or solutions. All of the interviewees who had some experience in the use of participatory evaluation techniques were firmly convinced that ongoing participatory evaluation and in particular the use of ongoing participatory techniques such as visualisation and focus groups offered the best approach to assess these outcomes. The PRA consultant went further to argue that properly applied, participatory evaluation can contribute to these outcomes. She argued that participatory techniques have the ability to initiate discussion in a non-threatening environment, encouraging, enabling and

empowering project participants, increasing their confidence and their levels of participation, thereby promoting greater understanding among project participants and contributing to the creation of a number of intangible development outcomes, including increased levels of participation and confidence.

- The balance between structuring an evaluation and an emergent evaluation design

All the interviewees identified the importance of flexibility and adaptability within evaluation design. The interviewees had, however, very divergent views on the nature of the evaluation design required to facilitate an evaluation. The interviewees with little experience of participatory approaches advised the researcher to develop the design in advance of the evaluation, with significant in-built flexibility to be able to accommodate any unforeseen circumstances. The interviewees with some experience of participatory approaches were, however, very conscious of the difficulties of balancing the need for an evaluation design with the need to involve evaluation participants in the development of the evaluation design. Two of these interviewees suggested the solution lay in the development of an outline evaluation framework, which indicated the direction and methodologies to be used within the evaluation, but which was dependent for its ultimate design and direction on the input of evaluation participants, a solution which was subsequently used in the development of the PEF (see Section 4.4 for details).

- Other Issues

The majority of the interviewees identified the role of the evaluator within participatory evaluation as important. They were of the opinion that the evaluator could have a profound effect on the process and implementation of the evaluation and, as such their role needed careful analysis and review. The belief of the evaluator in the participatory processes involved was also identified by one of the interviewees as a crucial element in the success of the approach, since the involvement and participation of the stakeholders was dependent on the ability of the evaluator to engage them. One of the more surprising issues raised by two of the interviewees experienced in the use of participatory techniques was the need for confidence in the use of participatory techniques. Both of these interviewees strongly advised the researcher to undertake some practical training in the use of participatory data

collection techniques (e.g. workshops, community meetings, the use of creative expression, collective map making, etc.).

Figure 4.4 summarises the main findings of this section in terms of the good practices that will be used in the development of the PEF in section 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Good practices identified as a result of the interviews with evaluators

- The evaluation and evaluation process should be representative and inclusive (providing all those who participated in the development with an opportunity to have their views represented).
- The question of who it is that constitutes the community and who is excluded from this definition should be resolved at the outset of the evaluation by the evaluator in consultation with the various evaluation stakeholders.
- The objectives of all the different stakeholder groups involved should be identified.
- The range and extent of external influences on the programme and on the evaluation should be identified and considered on an ongoing basis throughout the evaluation process.
- Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques & methods should be employed.
- The practice of triangulation should be used to ensure the validity of data.
- The nature, extent and timing of the evaluation feedback should be agreed at the outset.
- The evaluation must focus on the evaluation of the intangible outcomes of the development process.
- The evaluation should recognise that participatory techniques have an important role to play, firstly in the evaluation of the intangible process outcomes and secondly in the contribution they can make to these intangible process outcomes.
- The evaluation methodology employed should be flexible, adaptable and avoid being prescriptive.
- The communication of the evaluation findings to as wide an audience as possible is important.
- The evaluator's skills and confidence in the participatory approach can play a significant role.
- The evaluator must avoid the creation of unrealistic expectations about the outcomes of the evaluation among evaluation participants.

(Author, 1999)

4.5. THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (PEF)

Participatory evaluation is an evolving and iterative process, which develops through its application and through ongoing local participation and collaboration. There is therefore no overarching design or fixed approach in participatory evaluation (Knox & Hughes, 1994). The PEF developed here aims to provide a structure within which a particular participatory evaluation can evolve and develop in the knowledge that it is guided by principles of good practice. The framework is both flexible and adaptable enough to allow any trade-offs required, necessitated by time and resource constraints, political considerations, and the limitations of the individual to grasp the complex nature of social reality (Patton, 1987). The aims and strategies of the PEF were identified earlier in this chapter, through a review of the challenges posed for evaluation by rural community development which are summarised in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5. The aims and strategies of the PEF

The Aims of the PEF	The PEF Strategies to Achieve Aims
To make the community the centre of the evaluation and the evaluation process.	Involve the community in all stages of the evaluation.
To maximise the involvement of participants (in at least three stages of the evaluation process).	Provide ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the evaluation process.
To ensure each stage of the evaluation process facilitates learning for the various participants.	Provide a quality learning experience.
To identify individual and group ideologies which may camouflage processes.	Examine the various different social and economic processes and examine the relationship between the different processes.
To determine project participants' needs and whether these needs are met.	Work in a collaborative way with programme stakeholders to identify their needs.
To empower participants, contributing to levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.	Provide opportunities for ongoing dialogue, discussion and action.

The mechanisms and good practices necessary to implement these aims and strategies were identified earlier in this chapter through a review of good practices in the use of participatory techniques and through analysis of a series of interviews with rural development evaluators.

4.5.1. An outline of the different stages in the PEF

The PEF is not necessarily chronological, or sequential, although certain elements of the PEF may occur later or earlier than this outline would suggest. It is also the case that different elements of the PEF may be ongoing throughout the entire evaluation process. This section however (for the sake of clarity) examines the different elements of PEF in a linear sequence. Figure 4.6 outlines the main elements of the PEF as developed by the author as a basis for empirical work detailed in later chapters of this thesis.

Figure 4.6. The main elements of the PEF

1. **Definition of the boundaries (geographical and community) of the evaluation**
2. **Identification of the different potential participants in the evaluation**
3. **Establishment of contact with potential evaluation participants**
4. **Invitation to potential participants to participate in the evaluation process**
5. **Identification of the objectives of the evaluation participants**
6. **Identification of the evaluation terms of reference, questions and the nature and form of feedback required**
7. **Prioritisation of the evaluation questions**
8. **Outline of the data collection necessary**
9. **Collection of data**
10. **Analysis and interpretation of data collected**
11. **Ongoing presentation and discussion of evaluation findings**
12. **Further data collection and analysis (where necessary)**
13. **Further presentations and discussions of the ongoing evaluation findings**
14. **Identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations**
15. **Final presentations of the evaluation findings and recommendations**

(Author, 1998)

1. Definition of the geographical boundaries of the evaluation

The evaluator[10]/evaluation team defines the geographical boundaries of the programme /initiative to be evaluated

The geographical boundaries of the evaluation are generally pre-defined for formal rural community development programmes. In the case of less formal more organic development initiatives the boundaries may be more difficult to determine. Their definition is likely to require the input of some local knowledge.

2. Identification of the potential participants in the evaluation

The evaluator identifies the potential participants/stakeholders[11]

Identification of the potential participants in the evaluation is an important stage in the participatory evaluation process, since the establishment of the evaluation as an inclusive participatory process depends upon the involvement of all those who have a stake in the programme. It is at this stage that the issue (identified by the evaluator) of who it is that constitutes the community and who it is that is excluded needs to be resolved. The evaluation stakeholders are generally a more inclusive group that those more obviously involved in the development process. Evaluation stakeholders may for example include individuals who are not directly or indeed indirectly involved in the particular Programme under evaluation. The identification of the potential participants is therefore a complex process that involves review of existing documentation and meetings with key programme participants. This process of stakeholder identification also enables the evaluator to gain a better understanding of the context of the programme. It is at this stage also that the evaluator must introduce the practice of process observation and critical self-awareness in order to ensure the quality of the evaluation process and the role of the evaluator are under constant scrutiny, thereby avoiding the introduction of any unnecessary error and bias.

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[10] The PEF can be applied by either a single evaluator or by an evaluation team. However, to avoid unnecessary repetition the term evaluator is used throughout this outline.

3. Contact is established with potential evaluation participants

The evaluator meets with and establishes a relationship with each of the stakeholder groups identified

The challenge for participatory evaluation is the identification and inclusion of all the different stakeholder groups (characterised by their heterogeneity and potential diverse interests). The first meeting of the evaluator with the different stakeholder groups is therefore an important one. The evaluator must sell both him/herself and his/her belief in the participatory evaluation approach in order to engage the various stakeholder groups. The evaluator must also determine how representative a particular group is. If the evaluator decides that the section of the group he/she meets is not representative, he/she may have to arrange further meetings with the wider group. This stage of the evaluation can involve a considerable amount of time, and its success is largely dependent upon the ability of the evaluator to adopt a relaxed attitude, thereby fostering the development of greater levels of trust between the programme participants themselves and between the programme participants and the evaluator.

4. Potential participants are invited to participate in the evaluation process

The evaluator encourages these various different stakeholders groups to participate in the evaluation process

This is the first in a series of ongoing opportunities for participation to be offered to evaluation stakeholders. The evaluator must seek to encourage and facilitate the participation of all the different stakeholder groups in the evaluation process. The evaluator must also as a matter of good practice not overplay the potential outcomes and benefits of the evaluation, thereby avoiding the danger of disappointment of evaluation participants. It is at this stage too that the evaluation funder can input into the direction of the evaluation.

5. Identification of the objectives of the evaluation participants

The evaluator identifies the objectives of the different stakeholder groups

This identification process is undertaken through a series of meetings between the various different groups of programme participants and the evaluator. The individuals attending these meetings are asked to outline the objectives of the group they represent, firstly in terms of their group's objectives for participating in the programme, and secondly in relation to what issues the evaluation should address. The evaluator must afford each particular group an equal proportion of time and thereafter ensure the objectives and opinions of all the various different groups are equally represented. This exploration of the different stakeholders objectives also helps in the identification of individual and group ideologies and therefore contributes to an increased understanding of the complexities and the context of a particular programme, both factors which were identified as key aims and strategies of the PEF earlier in this chapter. This stage of the evaluation process also enables the context of the programme and of the evaluation to be better understood.

6. Identification of the terms of reference, evaluation questions and nature and form of the evaluation feedback required

The evaluator and the various stakeholder groups mutually agree the terms of reference, purpose of the evaluation, evaluation questions to be addressed and form and nature of the feedback required

This mutual agreement of the terms of reference, etc. for the evaluation is crucial if the PEF is to fulfil its aim, to make the community the centre of the evaluation and the evaluation process. The process by which this agreement is reached also offers an important opportunity for learning for all those involved in the evaluation. This can be a complicated process, however, particularly if the views and objectives of the different stakeholders are quite divergent. One of the mechanisms by which this can be achieved is through the forum of a stakeholder meeting[12].

[12] Depending on the scale of the evaluation a number of meetings may be needed.

Such meetings also provide a forum for a process of dialogue and negotiation through which evaluation stakeholders both learn and teach, which is a key element of the participatory evaluation process. The involvement of the evaluation stakeholders in the establishment of the evaluation terms of reference also serves to empower rural communities to take control of the evaluation process.

In order to be meaningful, these discussion must include consideration of the context of a particular initiative, the mechanisms used to implement the initiative and the processes and the outcomes which have resulted from the initiative. These terms of reference must be agreed in the light of the resources (including the time, funding and internal and external skills) available to undertake the evaluation.

7. Prioritisation of the evaluation questions

The evaluator and the various stakeholder groups in collaboration, prioritise the evaluation questions

It is generally not possible (given resource constraints) to address all evaluation questions equally. The evaluator, in collaboration with the stakeholders must therefore identify the priorities of the evaluation. A key element (identified in the review of participatory approaches) in this process is the implementation of the principle of optimisation, which ties together the pragmatic concepts of optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision. It is important that these evaluation priorities are mutually agreed on by all the stakeholders through the forum of a round table discussion at a meeting of all the various different groups, if the evaluation is to address the overall and mutually agreed terms of reference for the evaluation.

8. Outline the data collection necessary

The evaluator and the various stakeholder groups in collaboration, construct an outline of data collection necessary around the evaluation questions selected.

Ideally the evaluator and the various evaluation participants work together to construct an outline of the nature and extent of data collection to be undertaken, focusing on both the

tangible and intangible processes involved in a particular programme. Key good practices in participatory approaches indicate that this should be both adaptable and flexible. Good practice also suggests this data collection strategy should include the use of a variety of different data collection techniques, using participatory techniques where appropriate. Appropriate techniques include: the use of specific project-defined indicators (qualitative /quantitative,) focus group meetings, community meetings, creative investigative tools, popular creative expression, analytical tools, self recording tools, interview techniques, observation (through field visits) and review of secondary data. The choice of which techniques are used will vary from context to context, depending on circumstances. The selection of which techniques are used will have a significant effect on the nature of information collected, the analysis undertaken and the findings of the study. Evaluation participants and the evaluator alike must be made clearly aware of the consequences of their choices to include or exclude particular techniques. In this regard, the dual role of participatory techniques (identified by evaluators) as mechanisms for both data collection and development must also be highlighted.

9. Data collection

The evaluator and, where possible, the various evaluation stakeholder groups, collect the necessary data

Ideally the evaluator and the various evaluation participants again work together to collect the data necessary to undertake the evaluation. In this way, the evaluation participants can maximise the learning opportunities from this part of the evaluation process. In the majority of situations, however, the evaluator undertakes data collection. Participants generally do not have the time or inclination to become involved in the data collection process. It is also the case in small-scale evaluations that evaluation participants may be more comfortable dealing with an external evaluator, particularly if the information required is of a sensitive and personal nature. The principle of triangulation should also be applied within this process in order to ensure the reliability of data sources and data collection techniques.

10. Tidy up and categorise the data collected

The evaluator and where possible the various stakeholder groups tidy up and categorise the data

Ideally the evaluator and the evaluation participants should work together to tidy up and categorise the data collected. It is unrealistic in reality, however, to expect busy programme participants to become fully involved in this time consuming process. It is anticipated therefore, that this stage of the evaluation will generally be undertaken by the evaluator, with the exception of some of the more participatory techniques such as workshops and focus groups which involve the evaluation participants in both the collection and the subsequent analysis of data.

11. Ongoing presentation and discussion of the findings of the evaluation

The evaluator to initiate discussions with and between the various stakeholder groups uses the preliminary evaluation findings

The preliminary findings of the evaluation are identified through analysis of collected data. In some cases these findings may be inconclusive, and when this is the case, further data collection will almost certainly be necessary. The preliminary findings, whether conclusive or inconclusive, should be presented to the various evaluation participants for their further input and discussion. Particular issues arising from these findings can then be discussed in terms of the local situation and context. Local stakeholders should be encouraged, where possible, to chair these meetings thereby ensuring that these participants participate more fully in this part of the evaluation process and also avoid being over-influenced by the evaluator. It must also be remembered that the outcomes and conduct of these discussions also forms part of the evaluation process and findings.

12. Undertake further data collection and analysis (where necessary)

The evaluator in collaboration with the different stakeholder groups undertakes further data collection and analysis

The initial analysis of the data collected and subsequent discussions may identify gaps in the data collection processes. It may also be the case that the preliminary evaluation findings

may identify an issue, or series of issues not previously considered within the evaluation, but which the evaluation participants would like to explore. Therefore, the evaluation must be flexible enough to enable further data collection and analysis where necessary. This data should again be collected using a variety of mechanisms and sources according to the practices identified in Steps 9 and 10.

13. Further presentation and discussion of the ongoing evaluation findings

The ongoing evaluation findings are used to facilitate further discussions (if necessary) between the evaluator and the various stakeholder groups

The ongoing findings, whether conclusive or inconclusive, are presented to the various evaluation participants for their input and discussion (see Step 11 for details on how these discussions should be conducted and for what purposes).

This process of further data collection and analysis with subsequent discussion of the ongoing findings resulting from these processes (Steps 12 and 13) can be repeated a number of times, depending on the attitudes of the participants, the willingness and availability of the evaluator, and the resources available to undertake the evaluation.

14. Identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations

The evaluator and the evaluation stakeholders refine the recommendations through negotiation

Once the evaluator and the evaluation participants are satisfied they have undertaken sufficient data collection, analysis and discussion for their purposes, the overall findings and recommendations of the evaluation can be identified and used to form the basis of a series of discussions between project participants and the evaluator. These findings and recommendations will then be refined where necessary, based on these discussions.

15. Final presentations of the evaluation findings and recommendations

The evaluator presents the findings and recommendations of the evaluation

The final presentation of the evaluation findings and recommendations can take several forms, e.g. verbal presentation, theatre, video, a newsletter etc. which may or may not

include an evaluation report. Where an evaluation report is prepared this may need to be edited on a number of occasions following the input of the various stakeholders. In certain situations, however, a detailed formal evaluation report may not provide the most accessible mechanism by which to disseminate the evaluation findings. The form/s of the presentation/s of the overall findings of the evaluation must therefore be discussed and agreed collaboratively by the evaluator and the evaluation stakeholders and tailored to the needs of the various evaluation participants. In some cases, it may be necessary to present the overall findings of the evaluation in a variety of forms. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation must also be made readily available to all evaluation and programme participants.

4.5. THE NEXT STAGE

This chapter outlined both the PEF and the various mechanisms used to develop the PEF in accordance with the overall aim of this research - to examine the potential of participatory evaluation for rural community development. Chapter 5 goes on to describe how the framework was implemented, while Chapters 6 and 7 detail the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF and the results of the implementation of the PEF in each case study.

CHAPTER 5. THE EXAMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEF

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the overall research strategy by which the PEF developed in Chapter 4 is examined. This chapter also examines the potential of the researcher to influence the research and details how the PEF was implemented in the two case studies. This implementation process draws on what it is that constitutes rural community development and the different approaches that can be used to evaluate it detailed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively. The results of the implementation of the PEF are detailed separately in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 has three main aims:

- To outline the overall research strategy chosen to examine empirically the PEF;
- To highlight the potential of the researcher to influence research in general and this examination of participatory evaluation in particular;
- To detail how the PEF was implemented in the two case studies.

The chapter is divided into three parts:

- Section 5.2 outlines the overall research strategy used to examine the PEF. This section outlines the reasons for the adoption of a community-based, action-research strategy and a case-study type approach for the examination of the PEF. It also describes the mechanisms used to select the case studies and gives a brief background to each of the case studies selected.
- Section 5.3 examines the influence of the researcher on the development and implementation of the PEF.
- Section 5.4 outlines the implementation of the PEF in each case study.
- Section 5.5 highlights some of the theoretical and methodological issues arising from this chapter for the research.

5.2. THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research strategy for the appraisal of the PEF involved the adoption of a community-based action-research case study approach.

5.2.1. The PEF as a form of community based action research

The nature of the PEF with its emphasis on community participation, empowerment and collaboration between the researcher and the researched effectively precluded the use of a range of positivist research strategies (Yin, 1994), all of which require the researcher to remain firmly outside and separate from the subject of the research (Bateson, 1972). Thus a decision was made to adopt a community based action research approach for this investigation of the PEF. Community based action research has two main aims: 1) to produce knowledge and promote action directly useful to the community and 2) to empower the community at a deeper level through the process of construction and use of their own knowledge (Reason, 1994).

Community based action research is, in essence, a form of constructivist inquiry into practice. It is predicated on the belief that the mere recording of events and formulation of explanations by an uninvolved researcher is inadequate in and by itself to undertake a comprehensive evaluation (CARN, 1996). It seeks to involve people previously designated as subjects directly in the research processes, with those research processes applied in such a way as to benefit all participants directly (Stringer, 1996). Another important characteristic of community based action research is the emphasis it places on action as a result of the research. Action research to be action research must make a difference thereby distinguishing it from more traditional forms of research, which may or, may not lead to action (Stringer, 1996). The similarity of these key principles of action research with those of the PEF make community based action research a particularly appropriate research strategy for the investigation of participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation can be recognised as a form of action research in itself.

5.2.2. The selection of a case study approach

The major strength of the case study approach is that it enables the questions of 'how' and 'why' to be asked in a specific localised context. It seeks to record what is happening, while simultaneously examining the meanings associated with what is happening, thereby redirecting ongoing observations to refine or substantiate meanings. The decision to adopt a case study approach was also made on the basis of the experience of other evaluative researchers who had previously identified the relevance of the case study approach for and within evaluative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Cronbach *et al.* 1980, Patton, 1980). The advantages of the case study approach for evaluative research include:

- Its potential to explore the variety of linkages between implementation and effect in real life and in situations that are too complex for surveys or experimental strategies.
- Its ability to describe an intervention in the real life context in which it occurred.
- Its ability to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear single set of outcomes. (Yin, 1994)

The quality of the case study approach rests on a number of key issues. Yin (1994) identified four tests to examine the quality of case study research: construct validity tests, internal validity tests, external validity tests and reliability tests. Construct validity relates to the requirement to establish correct operational measures, while internal validity relates to the way in which causal relationships are established. External validity in contrast relates to the extent to which the findings of a particular study can be generalised, while reliability relates to the way in which the operations of the study were undertaken.

The nature of the community based action research case study (with its emphasis on the principles of deregulation[13], decentralisation[14] and co-operativeness[15]) effectively render these tests of case study quality, largely inappropriate to this type of case study approach (Guba, 1996). Community based action research case studies require very different tests in order to determine quality. These include tests of 'credibility', 'trustworthiness' and 'transferability' (Robson, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The credibility test is very similar to the 'trustworthiness' test, both of which relate to the level of confidence and trust that can be placed in the outcomes of a particular case study. Techniques used to enhance credibility and trustworthiness include prolonged involvement by the researcher, persistent observation and triangulation, all of which were central to the development of the PEF in Chapter 4. Transferability relates to the ability of the experience of the case study to be transferred to another situation and context. Transferability tests also include consideration of the extent and nature of the resources required for the implementation of the case study.

The recognition of participatory evaluation in general, and the PEF in particular, as forms of community-based action-research means that these tests used to determine the quality of a community based action research case study are equally relevant to the assessment of its quality, and as such can be used to assess the quality of the PEF in Chapter 8.

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[13] The decentralisation principle emphasises the need for a move away from efforts to uncover generalisable 'truths', towards a new emphasis on the local context, the antithesis to Yin's (1994) internal validity test.

[14] The principle of deregulation, considers scientific knowledge to be incomplete and reductionist and thereby moves away from the conventional rules of scientific partial research and an overriding concern with validity, reliability, objectivity and generalisability, towards the recognition that there is no tangible reality-no single truth. Deregulation is the antithesis of internal validity. That is not to say that action research is not scientific. Action research is rigorously empirical, for example, it requires people to define clearly and observe the phenomenon under investigation. It does not however always follow the prescribed procedures that have been inscribed as scientific methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; 1980).

[15] The principle of co-operative inquiry emphasises the need for co-operation and a lack of distinction between the researcher and the researched. It challenges the convention of objectivity that is central to the test of construct validity (Green, 1994).

5.2.2.1. The selection of the case studies

Available resources determined the number and nature of case studies to be undertaken within this research. In an ideal situation, a series of case studies to explore the effect of participatory evaluation on each type of rural community development programme would be undertaken, in order to explore the role of participatory evaluation. However, the funding and timing constraints imposed on this research precluded this option. For pragmatic reasons, therefore, a decision was made to undertake two case studies. The first case study is of an externally funded, locally delivered rural community development initiative and the second is a locally controlled community based rural community development initiative. These two case studies were selected on the basis that they are among the most widely used approaches for the delivery of rural community development at a local level.

The decision to select case studies in Ireland and Scotland was made on the basis that the researcher had worked in both situations and was therefore familiar with the development issues in both contexts. (The researcher had been involved as a research assistant in a community development project in County Cavan in 1991-1992, and had been employed in the Scottish Highlands as a Development Officer with the local regional council for a period of almost three years in the early 1990s). The selection of the actual case studies was made on the basis of informal discussions with a number of rural development experts in Ireland and Scotland (See section 4.3.2 for details). From these discussions the following case studies were selected:

Case Study 1. The Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme (an externally funded, locally delivered rural development initiative located in the Republic of Ireland).

Case Study 2. Community Development in Laggan (Laggan is a small village in the central Highlands of Scotland which is home to a variety of community based initiatives).

5.2.3. The overall research strategy

The overall research strategy using a community based action research case study approach was as follows:

1. Development of the PEF (Chapter 4)

2. Implementation of the PEF (in the context of two case studies) (Chapter 5)

3. Implementation of the process of implementation of the PEF (in both case studies) (Chapter 6)

4. Outcomes and results arising from the PEF (in both case studies) (Chapter 6 & 7)

5. A review of the effect of 'having undertaken a PEF' (on both cases studies) (Undertaken approximately 3-6 months after the completion of the original PEF) (Chapter 8)

6. An evaluation of the role of the PEF in both case studies and an assessment of the potential for the wider application of the PEF for rural community development (Chapter 9)

Each of these steps is more fully described below.

1. Development of the PEF

This is outlined in detail in Chapter 4.

2. Implementation of the PEF

The PEF was implemented in two case studies using the community based action research approach detailed in the previous section. The reasons for the selection of the particular case studies are outlined within this chapter, together with various procedures used to implement the PEF in each case study.

3. Assessment of implementation of the PEF

Among some of the main aims of participatory evaluation in general, and the PEF in particular identified in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively, were 1) to ensure each stage of the evaluation process facilitates learning for the participants and 2) to empower evaluation participants through their participation in the evaluation process. It was argued in these chapters that the process of implementation of the PEF would have an important role to play within the overall evaluation. Chapter 6 examines the outcomes that resulted from the process of the implementation of the PEF in each of the two case studies.

4. Results arising from the PEF

The results of the implementation of the PEF are detailed for each case study in Chapter 7. These results i.e. the evaluation findings and recommendations, are also contained within two reports entitled: An Evaluation of the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme (from a Development Perspective) and Community Development in Laggan (from a Development Perspective) respectively, together with a Laggan Community Development Newsletter which highlighted the main results of the Laggan evaluation. Both of these reports and the newsletter were important elements of the research strategy as they provided crucial forms of feedback to the case study participants. (These reports are therefore included within this research as Appendix 2, Appendix 3, and Appendix 4, respectively).

5. A review of the effect of the PEF

The researcher returned to each of the case studies 3-6 months after the completion of the formal evaluation process to undertake a review of the longer term effects of the PEF on the evaluation participants and on the initiatives under evaluation. The mechanisms used to implement these reviews together with the findings of these reviews are detailed in Chapter 8. The findings of these reviews were disseminated to the case study participants by means of two reports entitled: A Brief Analysis of the Effect of the Evaluation on the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme and Community Development in Laggan - A Brief Analysis of the Effect of the Evaluation. These reports were an important element of the research strategy, as they provided the feedback necessary for case study participants. (The

full text of both of these reports is therefore included within Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 of this research respectively.)

6. An overall evaluation of the PEF

Chapter 9 identifies a number of key criteria for the evaluation of the role and effectiveness of PEF. These criteria are drawn from Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 and are used to evaluate the overall role and effect of the PEF in relation to the two case studies.

5.2.4. The Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme case study

The European Commission in 1991 launched the LEADER I Programme.
It was established to promote the innovative use of local resources in an integrated way by local people, for local needs (Fischler, 1996). Local development agencies were subsequently invited to submit development plans for their areas, with decisions on the individual projects to be aided, to be made by the local action group.
The completion of the LEADER I Programme was followed by the launch of the LEADER II Programme (1994-1999) in 1994. LEADER II placed a much greater emphasis on the role and need for community development than LEADER I and thus has a substantially different focus to the original LEADER I Programme.

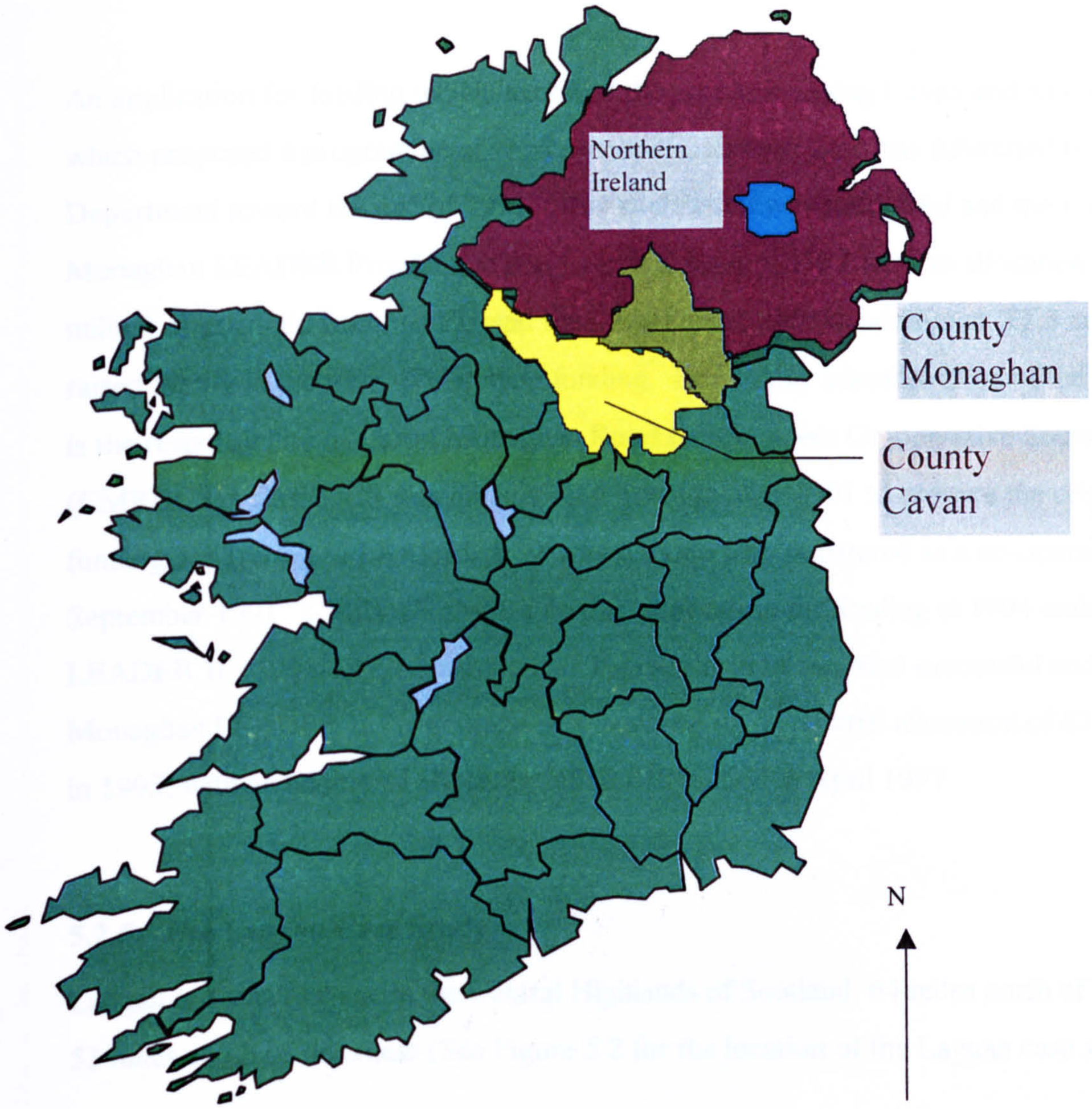
The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food manage the Irish LEADER Programme. They launched the original LEADER Programme in 1991 with an invitation to local action groups to submit funding applications. Applications took the form of a development and business plan for a particular geographical area. This departmental invitation for the submission of funding applications prompted a variety of individuals involved in development in counties Cavan and Monaghan to consider the possibility of submitting an application.

The original eligibility criteria established by the Department required applications from areas with a population base of about 100,000. This meant that it was necessary for Co. Cavan and Co. Monaghan to work together to submit one application for both counties.

The counties of Cavan and Monaghan have a joint total population of 104,089 and cover an area of 318,153 hectares or 4.6% of the area of the State (see Figure 5.1 for the location and map of the Cavan Monaghan case study area). Population density is low and there are no large towns in the region - Monaghan which is the county town of Monaghan is the largest with a population of 6,284, followed by Cavan, the county town of County Cavan, with a population of 5,219 (CSO, 1992). Both counties have suffered a steady population decline, the population has dropped by 43,500 since 1926 (CSO, 1992). This decline has particularly affected the more remote rural areas in the region. There is, in addition, a high percentage of the population in the dependency age groups, together with a large young population 43% of the population was aged under 24 in 1992 (CSO, 1992).

Economic activity within the Cavan Monaghan area is based on agriculture (primarily dairying) manufacturing industries and tourism. Unemployment is lower than the national average, but there is considerable underemployment in the farming sector (CMRDCS, 1991). The proximity to Northern Ireland with which the region has a 144 km border can in addition be seen to have negatively affected both industry and tourism within the region (CMRDCS, 1991). The area also suffers from poor infrastructure; the road network although extensive is in poor condition, while there is neither a railway system nor an airport within the region (CMRDCS, 1991).

Figure 5.1. Location of the Cavan Monaghan case study area

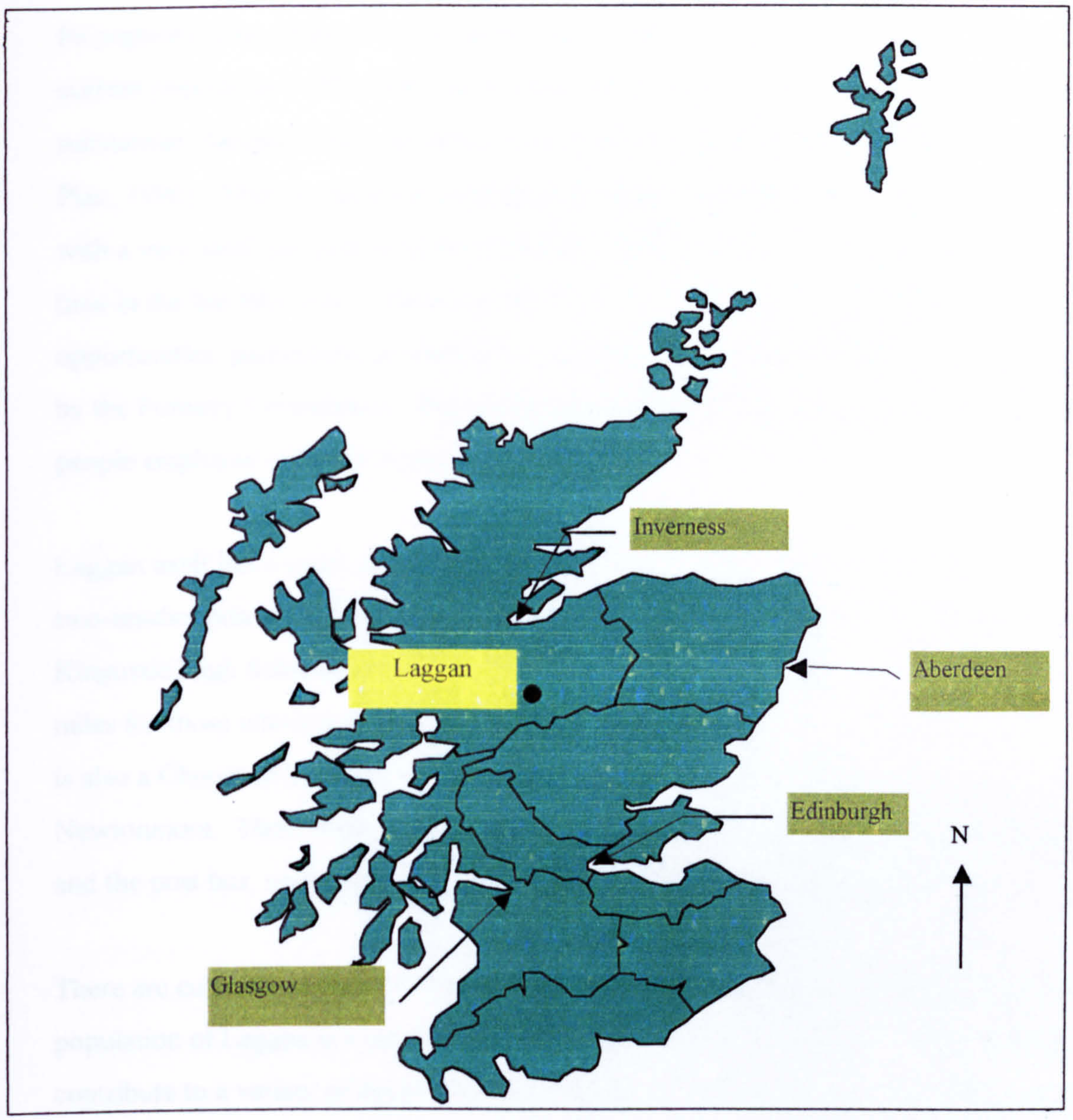


An application for funding which identified the problems facing Cavan and Monaghan and which proposed a programme of work to address these issues, was submitted to the Department toward the end of 1991. This application was successful and the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme was launched in April 1992 with an allocation of £2.5 million of grant aid from the EU and the government, with an additional £2.5 million to be raised locally in the form of matching funding. Day to day administration of the Programme is the responsibility of Cavan Monaghan Rural Development Co-operative Society Ltd. (CMRDCS). CMRDCS was initially established in May 1991 to prepare the original funding application to LEADER I. It was subsequently registered as a co-operative in September 1991. CMRDCS made a further application for funding in 1994 under the LEADER II (1995-1999) Programme. This application was also successful and the Cavan Monaghan LEADER II Programme was launched with an initial allocation of £2.767 million in 1995, with an additional allocation of £0.610 million in April 1997.

5.2.5. The Laggan Case Study

Laggan is a small village in the Central Highlands of Scotland, 64 miles north of Perth and 53 miles south of Inverness (See Figure 5.2 for the location of the Laggan case study area).

Figure 5.2. Location of the Laggan case study area in Scotland



Its population has been in steady decline since 1900 when the population was 929, and its current population is 205. This level, while relatively stable over the last 20 years, masks substantial changes in the population composition (Laggan-LEADER II Draft Local Action Plan, 1996). There is currently a significantly higher proportion of the population over 50, with a very small proportion of the population aged between 20-50, than compared with any time in the last fifty years. There has also been a gradual decline in local employment opportunities, particularly in relation to the numbers employed on the large local estates and by the Forestry Commission. The agricultural sector is the largest employer with about 20 people employed on half a dozen farms.

Laggan itself has a small community-run shop; a well equipped doctors' surgery and a small two-teacher primary school (with a roll of 21 in April 1997). Older pupils generally travel to Kingussie High School (a round trip of 22 miles for students from Laggan village and 34 miles for those who travel from Kinlochlaggan at the western end of Laggan parish). There is also a Church of Scotland whose minister is shared between the neighbouring village of Newtonmore. There is no public transport in Laggan other than the school bus to Kingussie and the post bus, neither of which offer a regular year round daily service.

There are currently at least 10 community groups active in Laggan, which given the small population of Laggan is a substantial number. All of these groups aim in their own way to contribute to a variety of developments in Laggan. These groups, some of which are related to one another, undertake a variety of activities. Laggan Community Association (LCA) for example, which was among the first of the Laggan community groups formed, (established in 1974) has initiated a variety of local community based initiatives over the years. This includes playing a fundamental role in the ongoing provision of a television signal and the establishment of the community owned Trading Company, which took over the local shop, thereby preventing its closure. LCA was also responsible for the establishment of a number of subcommittees to deal with specific initiatives including affordable housing (Strathmashie Housing Committee, Laggan Housing Committee) and the future of Strathmashie Forest

(through the Laggan Forestry Initiative, the Laggan Forest Trust and the Laggan Forestry Management Company).

5.3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE RESEARCHER

The recognition of the influence of the researcher on research and increasingly the effects of the research on the researcher (May, 1993), is part of the postmodernist argument that there are no universal truths, because all human investigators are grounded in human society and can therefore only produce locally and historically specific insights (Delamont, 1996; Schwalbe, 1993). To date, discussions on the influence of the researcher's value system have however, been primarily in the fields of anthropology, literary criticism, sociology and women's studies. This debate has ranged from a focus on the textual properties of writers (Stanley, 1993; Geertz, 1988); the lived experiences and reflexivity of the researcher (Oakley & Calloway, 1992); the emotionality of the researcher (Stanley and Morgan, 1993); the psychological healing involved in writing autobiography (Hooks, 1989); the social locale of the researcher (Miller, 1991); the intersubjective nature of research (Okely & Calloway, 1992) and the researcher's implications for interpersonal and societal power relations (Okely & Calloway, 1992). The result has been the adoption of a more subjectivist position that seeks to identify and include consideration of the social properties, personal experiences and the self-awareness of the researcher in their research work and writing. Specifically this requires the researcher to explain how their experiences of the research variables (e.g. class, gender, nationality) has or has not influenced the different stages of the research process. The adoption of a constructivist approach to the evaluation of rural community development can clearly therefore be seen to require reflection on the role and influence of the researcher on the research.

The researcher plays a number of different roles within this overall study; she is alternatively the 'developer', the 'implementer' and the 'evaluator' of the PEF. Moreover, within each of these roles the researcher is also asked to take on the mantle of perceiver, selector, interpreter, guard against distortions of bias and prejudice and in certain situations,

developer. Each of the different roles played by the researcher has considerable potential to affect the study, while collectively they have the potential to profoundly influence this research. This section goes on to examine the overall influence of the researchers identity[16] and value system (including her feelings and emotions) on the research structure and design, while the influence of the researcher on the process of research implementation is discussed in Chapters 6 & 7 respectively.

This examination of the influence of the researcher is limited by a number of factors. These include the ability of the researcher to adequately reflect on her role given her lack of experience of this process, her partial perspective, incomplete memory and the passing of time (it is nearly five years since this study began, and longer still, since the researcher first conceived the study) (Boucher, 1994). Tempered by the knowledge of the limitations of self-reflection what follows is an analysis of the influence of the researcher on this research.

5.3.1. Researcher Biography

The researcher is a thirty-one year old Irish female, brought up on a farm near Dublin. She has a primary qualification in agricultural science and a post graduate qualification in rural planning. She worked in the early 1990s as a researcher attached to a university on a variety of community based projects in the Midlands and Border Counties of Ireland. She then moved to Scotland to work as a Development Officer in the Scottish Highlands where she lived and worked for a three years period. She subsequently moved south to England to begin work on a doctorate. During this time she (the researcher) also worked as a contract researcher on a number of community development orientated research projects. More recently the researcher returned to Ireland to take up employment as Research Officer

[16] This type of 'researcher reflexivity' is generally accompanied by the use of the pronoun 'I' (May, 1993). This researcher has however made a decision, for consistency and simplicity purposes not to adopt this convention and to use the more impersonal pronoun 'she' or the term 'the researcher' throughout this study.

with the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, based in Monaghan a town just south of the border with Northern Ireland.

5.3.2. The Research and the PEF Design

The choice of research topic was clearly influenced by the researcher's rural background, by her experiences of living in a variety of often quite remote rural areas and working with and supporting a variety of rural community groups. The practitioner and activist background of the researcher can be seen to have pushed the research in certain ways. The ethnic background of the researcher as an Irish woman also influenced the identification of the research topic and the selection of the location of the case studies in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, close 'Celtic cousins' (Delamont, 1996). Another particularly important factor in the design of the research must be seen to have been the researcher's ongoing fascination in a similar way to Hockey (1996) by the myth of the 'lone ethnographer' (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p200).

In general terms if one accepts Denzin (1989) and others perspective that gender filters knowledge the identity of the researcher as a woman almost certainly also had a significant effect on the design and composition of the research. Gender can also be seen to have an effect on the implementation of the research. In relation to interviews for example, Fontana and Frey (1994) argue that the sex of the interviewer and of the respondent make a difference given that interviews take place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones. Other factors that influenced this study design relate to the researcher's motives for pursuing a Ph.D. which like lots of motives, were mixed. On one level the doctorate enabled the researcher to pursue her fascination with rural communities the quiet people in the remote places without having to work within the discipline and tight schedules of contract research. At another level the researcher had rather vague aspirations toward a future academic career and the knowledge that possession of a doctorate would aid that process.

Underneath all these motives however was another (be it somewhat naive) 'of wanting to produce something with practical relevance for community groups'. This concern of the researcher with 'practical relevance' can be seen to have largely derived from her experience as a rural development practitioner and her knowledge of the invaluable but generally thankless work undertaken by a variety of groups in rural areas. It was also motivated by her experience of working with community groups and her knowledge of their frustrations. This overarching concern of the researcher with producing something with a practical relevance for community groups directed this study acting as a positive force and driving the researcher through the implementation of the two case studies. At the same time, it can be seen to have provided limits to the data collected and in turn prescribed the nature of the research conducted. It also caused the researcher some difficulty in that she constantly had to remind herself that she was no longer a rural development practitioner but a researcher investigating rural community development.

The choice of a constructivist approach was influenced by the researcher's awareness of limits of positivist approaches and particularly expert-based approaches to explore the complexities of rural community development. The researcher had direct experience of studies commissioned by project funders, which did not pick up on particular local issues generally because the studies were too narrowly conceived or focused. The researcher had also experienced at first hand of the frustrations of community groups whose opinions, where they were sought, seemed to have counted for little. In this case, the researchers belief that local communities should be directly involved in changes that effect them can be seen to have affected the choice of evaluation approaches and research methodologies. The emphasis on the use of participatory approaches and techniques was in turn influenced by the researcher's brief observation of the use of the successful use of participatory techniques in a small village in Tanzania during a short stay there. This emphasis was reinforced through the researchers participation in a participatory methodology -training course held in the first year of studies.

5.3.3. The Selection and Design of the Case Studies

The selection of the case studies was clearly influenced by the researchers background and by her life experiences of working both in Ireland and Scotland and by her desire to work with people who she could understand, enjoy and relate to easily, thereby playing to her strengths. The choice the particular case study was in turn influenced by the researcher's fascination for undoubtedly rural locations and by her previous knowledge of both of these locations. She had worked in both regions previously (although not in the selected case study areas) and had a small network of contacts and friends in each region that would, she felt, provide the necessary stimulation and distraction that she would need to conduct her work. Also from a purely practical perspective the researcher was of the opinion that these pre-existing local contacts would assist her in making limited resources stretch further than they otherwise might have.

Direct experience of living and working in rural communities made the researcher acutely aware of the number of people who are uncomfortable and reticent in the context of formal meetings or group situations. This awareness and belief in the importance of trying to find other ways through which these individuals could become involved can be seen to have influenced the selection of research techniques. This selection was also affected by the researcher's belief in the importance of capturing not only the essence but also the feelings and emotions of people. To do this the researcher sought to select techniques which would allow her to digress and elaborate thereby develop closer relationships with participants, minimise status differences and try and do away with the traditional hierarchical situations that arise in the use of certain methodologies like interviews (Frey & Fontana, 1994). The researcher used her rural and particularly her agricultural origin as a reference point for developing a trust and rapport with the case study participants. This in turn enabled the researcher to be more herself, to answer questions and express feelings that can be seen to have suited both the personality and the temperament of the researcher. Methodologically, this approach also allowed participants the freedom of open-ended responses, thus participants were encouraged to digress. These digressions while time consuming and

sometimes frustrating for the researcher generated interesting and useful information for both evaluations.

The design of case studies and the quality of the data resulting were also affected by the researchers belief that research should be a two way process, rather that simply an extractive one, where the researcher comes gets the information and goes. This researcher was of the opinion that both the researcher and the researched should gain and that there can be no real intimacy or trust without reciprocity (May, 1993). As such, the researcher made a decision that she would provide practical assistance to the case studies where requested. The researcher although aware that this approach could leave her at risk of becoming too involved and of 'going native' felt confident that she would not fall pray to this problem, besides the reciprocal nature of the relationship sought to appease the researchers concerns about the extractive nature of research in general (Fetterman, 1991).

5.4. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEF

The implementation of the PEF broadly followed the 15-stage process outlined in Figure 4.7 in Chapter 4. Initial contact with the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme and with Laggan Community Association was made by letter. Representatives from each of the selected case study areas subsequently agreed to meet with the researcher to discuss the research proposal in more detail. These initial meetings were critical since entry into the case study for the researcher, was dependent on the recognition by potential case study participants that the research could be useful to them. These meetings also enabled the researcher to begin the familiarisation process, through the collection and later review of a range of secondary documentation and materials relating to the operation of the case studies. The PEF was implemented differently in each case study given the different contexts and circumstances of each study.

5.4.1. The implementation of the PEF in the Cavan Monaghan case study

The researcher initially met with representatives of Cavan Monaghan Rural Development Co-operative Society Ltd. (CMRDCS) to discuss the research (February 1996). The representatives of CMRDCS who attended this meeting were broadly supportive of the proposal and agreed to raise it at the next monthly CMRDCS Board meeting. The Board subsequently agreed to allow the evaluation to proceed.

The researcher arrived in the case study area the following May 1996, and was based there in the CMRDCS offices for a six month period (18/5/96-30/10/96). What follows is an outline of the implementation of the 15 stage PEF outlined in Figure 4.7 in the Cavan Monaghan case study

1. Definition of the boundaries of the evaluation

The boundaries of the case study were pre-defined by the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme as the counties of Cavan and Monaghan. Therefore in this application of the PEF, it was not necessary to define the boundaries of the evaluation.

2. Identification of the potential participants in the evaluation

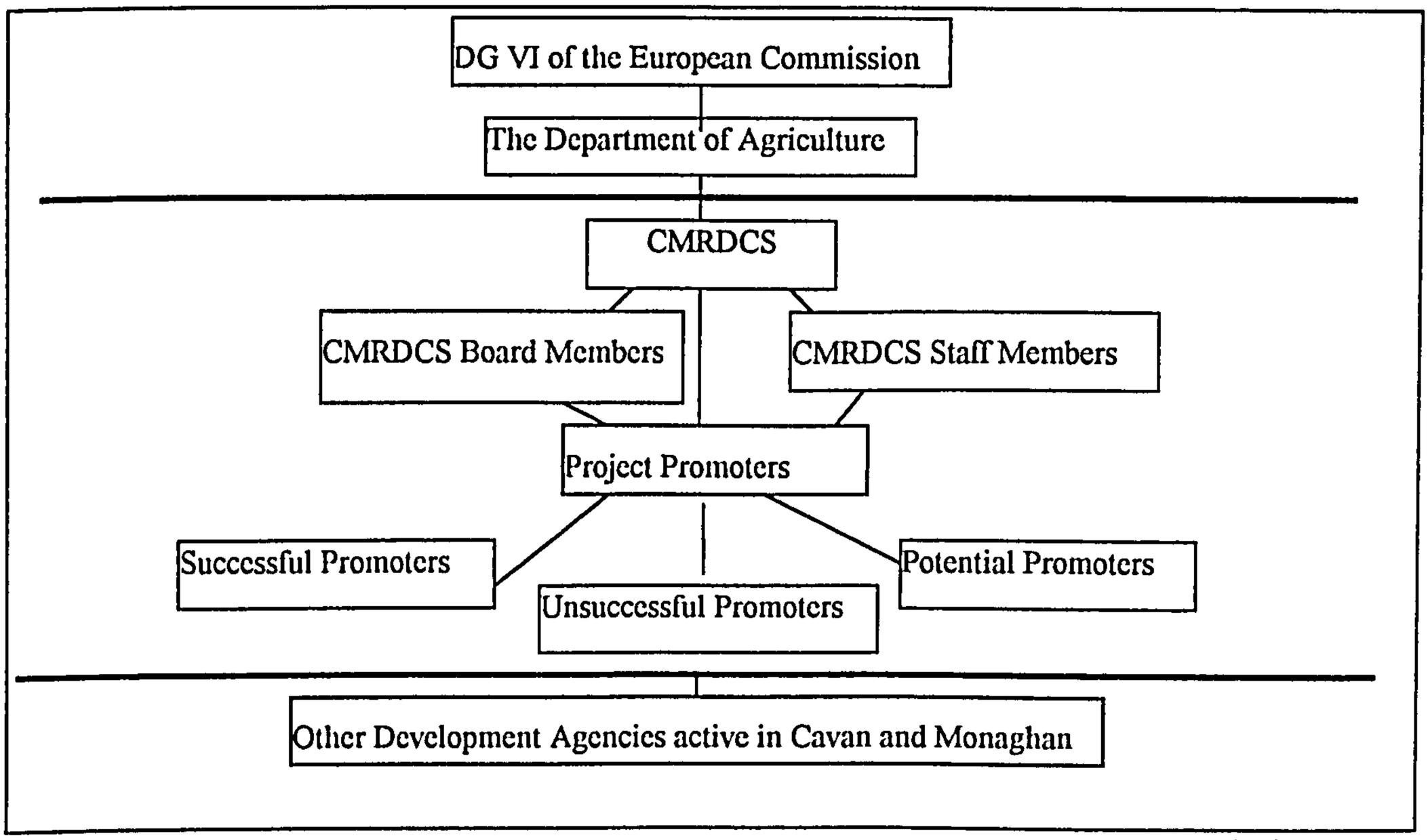
The identification of the potential participants was relatively simple, given that the main organisation, charged with the overall responsibility for the delivery of the Programme, CMRDCS, was interested (this was the case both when CMRDCS was initially contacted by letter and in the subsequent meeting which followed between the researcher and representatives of CMRDCS in the proposal to undertake a participatory evaluation and therefore keen to support the researcher).

3. Contact is established with potential evaluation participants

One of the first tasks of the researcher on arrival in the case study area was to establish contact with other potential evaluation participants. This was not as easily achieved as had been anticipated, however, as access to project files was only possible through CMRDCS, and access was delayed until agreed by the CMRDCS Board. All decisions within

CMRDCS have to be agreed by the CMRDCS Board. This delay in access was surprising given that the Board was supportive of the evaluation and keen for it to proceed. It did, however, highlight the importance placed on confidentiality[17] and the key role of the Board in decision making. Familiarisation with the Programme was gained through a review of existing secondary information and through informal meetings with Programme staff and Board members. Once access to project files was agreed, the researcher was able to identify other potential evaluation participants without delay. Potential participants and the relationships between these potential participants are outlined in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3. A map of the potential evaluation participants in Cavan Monaghan.



(Author, 1998)

4. Potential participants are invited to participate in the evaluation process

Inviting potential evaluation participants to participate in the evaluation process was a complex operation, given the diverse nature of the potential participants identified (see

[17] Access to programme files and the minutes of meetings in particular are restricted given the confidential nature of much of this material.

Figure 5.3 for details). Contact was readily established with CMRDCS Board members and staff through the forum of ongoing staff and Board member meetings. Contact was also relatively easily established with other development agencies through a letter from the assistant manager of CMRDCS that outlined the purposes of the evaluation. A similar letter was also sent to the Department of Agriculture and DG VI of the European Commission.

The large number and diverse nature of project promoters and potential project promoters identified as potential evaluation participants did however cause some difficulties. The category of potential project promoters theoretically could include all Cavan and Monaghan residents who have not submitted a funding application. Their sheer number meant it was impossible to include this group as active participants in the evaluation process, but the researcher did, with the assistance of Programme files, identify a smaller subgroup of potential project promoters[18]. A sample of these potential project promoters and actual promoters were then selected and contacted. A total of 29 project promoters and potential project promoters were selected at random from all the different promoter types (individuals, groups, businesses, and co-operatives).

The nature, scale and geographic distribution of the selected project promoters, together with the expense and time involved in facilitating their ongoing involvement in the evaluation process effectively limited their involvement. Similar problems applied to the Department, European Commission and various Development Agency representatives: these problems effectively rendered them passive participants. It was also the case that Board members requested that any meetings with the Board necessitated by the evaluation, be held through the forum of ongoing meetings, thereby ensuring the evaluation process did not place much additional demands (for attendance at meetings in particular) on Board members.

[18] The subgroup of potential promoters was comprised of all those potential promoters who had contacted the Programme and received an application form, but had not followed up this initial inquiry.

5. Identification of the objectives of the evaluation participants

The identification of the objectives of the various evaluation participants was undertaken using a variety of mechanisms depending on the type of the participant. The objectives of the Board members were identified through informal discussions with Board members. These objectives were subsequently presented anonymously to Board member meetings with discussions focused on these different objectives. The researcher facilitated these discussions in order to ensure that all Board members were able to participate equally in the ongoing discussions. These discussions were particularly useful as they identified a number of quite sensitive issues within the operation of the Programme. The objectives of the Programme staff were identified through a similar process of informal interviews and discussions at ongoing staff meetings.

6. Identification of the terms of reference, evaluation questions and nature and form of the evaluation feedback required

The identification of the evaluation terms of reference was undertaken by the researcher in collaboration with the Board and Programme staff through the forum of a round table discussion at the monthly Board meeting. This process identified a number of questions to be addressed by the evaluation. It was also agreed at this meeting that the ongoing evaluation findings would be presented to the Board on a regular basis through the forum of the monthly Board meetings. The researcher also agreed to prepare a formal report on completion of the evaluation, which identified the key findings of the evaluation. This final report was also to be accompanied by a presentation of the main findings of the evaluation.

7. Prioritisation of the evaluation questions

The round table discussion identified a range of evaluation questions related to various aspects of the operation and delivery of the Programme. The majority of these were related to the delivery of the community development element of the Programme as such. The Board and staff agreed that the evaluation would focus specifically on:

- An examination of the community development processes within the Programme;

- An examination of the community development processes affected by the Programme;
- An examination of how these processes were monitored;
- The identification of mechanisms which could be used to enhance these ongoing processes.

8. Outline the data collection necessary

The researcher sought to involve Board members and staff in the development of the strategy for data collection. None of the individuals in these groups was willing or prepared to participate to any great extent in this process. The researcher subsequently prepared an outline strategy that she discussed with Programme staff in order to determine the feasibility and the practicality of the approach. Following these discussions the strategy was amended and subsequently implemented.

9. Data Collection

Data was collected from a variety of sources and through the use of the variety of data collection techniques, many of which were ongoing throughout the whole process of implementation of the PEF. In order to ensure accuracy and reliability, the researcher introduced the practice of triangulation, with the use of at least three different data sources together with a variety of data collection techniques, thereby enabling the researcher to ensure greater reliability in the data collection process. The data was collected using the following methods:

1) Interviews:

- With all CMRDCS staff;
- With 13 members of the CMRDCS Board;
- With representatives of six other local Development Agencies;
- With a Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry representative in Dublin;
- With a representative from DG VI of the European Commission.

All interviews followed a broadly similar semi-structured format. They were all taped, transcribed and analysed according to the evaluation questions identified in step 6.

2) Reviews of existing documentary information

(Annual reports, minutes of meetings, etc.)

3) Round table, focus group discussions (facilitated by the researcher)

- At Board level

  (held through the forum of ongoing Board member meetings including monthly Board Meetings and ongoing sub-committee meetings)
- With CMRDCS staff

  (Held through the forum of the regular ongoing staff meetings)

4) Participant observation

- At monthly Board meetings and subcommittee meetings
- At staff meetings (the role of the researcher at these meetings changed during the course of the evaluation process from that of participant observer, to reluctant[19] participant, to active participant. This change reflected the growing staff interest in the experiences of the researcher and in the findings of the evaluation process)

5) Informal meetings and discussions

- With CMRDCS staff
- With CMRDCS Board members

6) The keeping of diaries

- The two community development officers kept weekly diaries of their activities for the purposes of the evaluation
- A diary kept by the researcher

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[19] A reluctant participant is a participant in a meeting who only answers a question or volunteers an opinion when specifically asked.

7) Project Promoter Survey

- A survey of 27 LEADER project promoters

  -Successful and unsuccessful under LEADER I

  -Successful and unsuccessful under LEADER II.

  -Potential promoters under LEADER II

  (See Appendix 2 for details)

10. Tidy up and categorise the data collected

The data collected was analysed and categorised as it was collected by the researcher using key word analysis under three headings: 1) Data related to the development of the Programme in general; 2) Data which related to the outcomes (both tangible and intangible) of the Programme; 3) Data which related to the wider impact of the Programme.

11. Ongoing presentation and discussion of the findings of the evaluation

The initial findings of the evaluation were presented to the monthly Board meeting and the regular staff meetings for discussion. These discussions resulted in some small immediate changes in the way the Board operates and meets (the use of name badges, the circulation of meetings between different locations, etc.). Following these discussions, it was agreed that all further data collection would focus on the examination of the more complex less tangible outcomes of the ongoing development work undertaken by the Programme.

12. Undertake further data collection and analysis (where necessary)

Further data collection concentrated exclusively on the examination of the delivery of the community development aspect of the Programme and particularly on the work undertaken by the community development officers. The researcher worked closely with the community development officers to develop a monitoring system for community groups. The community development officers then began to implement this system, with the system revised in the light of their experience.

13. Further presentation and discussion of the ongoing evaluation findings

This system and its findings were subsequently presented by the community development officers to the Board for further discussion. Board members agreed that the community development officers would continue to work with the researcher to refine this system.

14. Identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations

These discussions also reviewed the ongoing evaluation findings and agreed the format for the presentation of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations for the evaluation.

15. Final presentations of the evaluation findings and recommendations

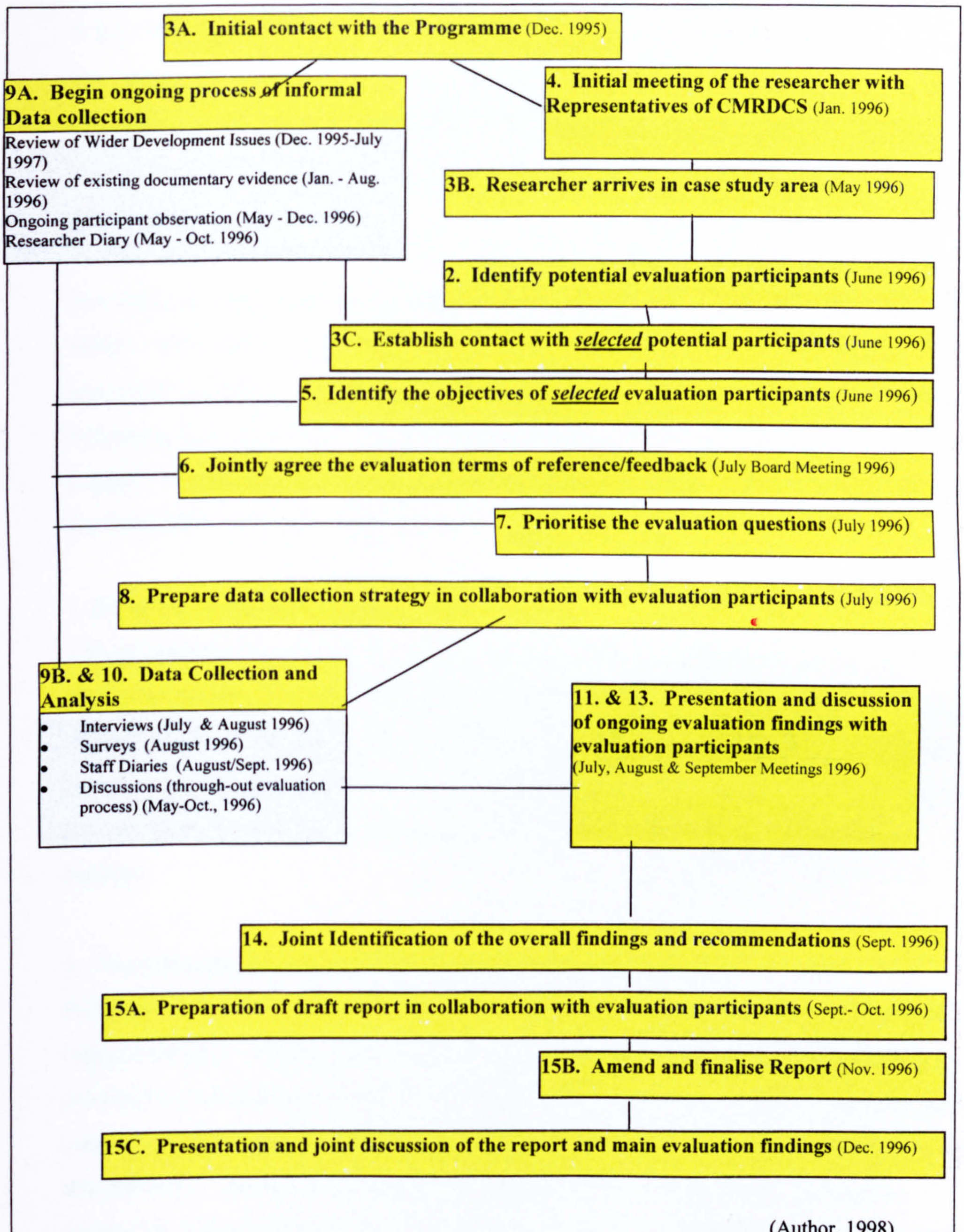
The researcher left the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme offices following the preparation of a draft final report. Due to time restrictions, it was not possible to discuss this draft report at a Board meeting. A number of individual staff and Board members did find time to read and comment on the draft. The report was subsequently revised and finalised in the light of these comments. The final report was then sent to the CMRDCS offices for dispatch to each Board and Staff member. The researcher subsequently returned to present the main findings of the report at the December 1996 Board meeting. This presentation was followed by a question and answer session to clear up any uncertainties, and was followed by a more general discussion of the main evaluation recommendations.

Figure 5.4 outlines the implementation of the PEF in the Cavan Monaghan case study, and attaches dates to each stage. The numbers relate the stages of implementation of the Cavan Monaghan PEF to the different stages of the PEF outlined in Figure 4.7. In some cases these different steps have been broken down into a number of different parts.

The implementation of the PEF in Cavan Monaghan is broadly similar to the 15 stage PEF outlined in Figure 4.7. It differs in relation to the exclusion of stage 1 within the implementation of the PEF in Cavan Monaghan. Stage 1 was unnecessary in this implementation of the PEF because the boundaries of the evaluation were pre-determined by the boundaries of the LEADER Programme. The implementation of the PEF in Cavan

Monaghan also saw the sub-division of some stages of the PEF into a number of different parts. For example, stage 3 of the PEF detailed in Figure 4.7 was subdivided into three distinct parts, as contact with evaluation participants took place over an extended time period. Stage 9, in the data collection element of the Cavan Monaghan PEF also differed from the original PEF outline in Figure 4.7. It too was broken up into a number of different elements, as data collection was ongoing throughout the formal evaluation process and in advance of the commencement of the process. The sub-division of stage 15 into three parts also differs from the original PEF. This sub-division of stage 15 into a number of parts was necessary in order to ensure all evaluation participants were provided with opportunities to contribute to and comment on the presentation of the evaluation findings and recommendations.

Figure 5.4 An outline of the implementation of the PEF in Cavan Monaghan



(Author, 1998)

5.4.2. The implementation of the PEF in the Laggan case study

This evaluation took place over a nine-week period just prior to the busy lambing season and in advance of the tourist season (March - May 1997). This timing of the evaluation was critical in order to ensure as broad a spectrum of the community in Laggan was able to participate.

The initial meeting with representatives from Laggan was held in the Community Office in March 1996, where it was agreed that the researcher would be allowed to undertake the proposed evaluation. The researcher also used this meeting to collect a range of background information on ongoing community developments in Laggan. The researcher returned to Laggan in February 1997 to commence the evaluation. What follows is an outline of the implementation of the 15 stage PEF in the Laggan case study.

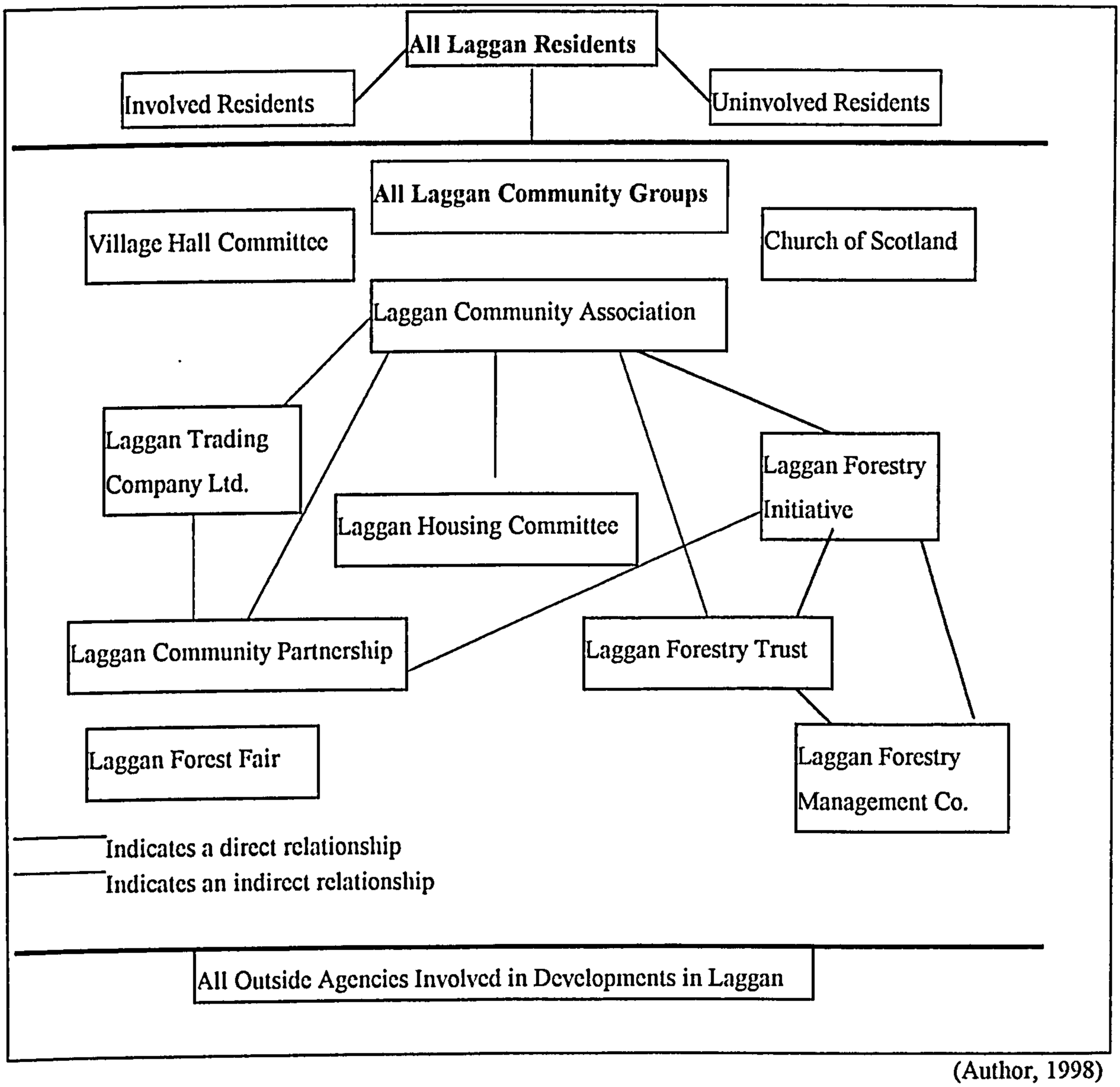
1. Definition of the boundaries of the evaluation

The geographical boundaries of the Laggan case study were established with the input of local individuals who agreed that any consideration of community development in Laggan should include not only the village of Laggan, but all the other communities within Laggan parish (e.g. Kinlochlaggan, Garva, etc.). Laggan parish while large (it is about 23 miles long and 18 miles wide and covers a total area of 152,239 acres), has a population of 205 persons.

2. Identification of the potential participants in the evaluation

Potential evaluation participants were divided up into three groups: 1) All residents in Laggan parish, 2) All community groups active in Laggan and 3) All outside agencies involved in community development in Laggan. The number and nature of active groups in Laggan complicated the identification of the potential community group participants. It was also difficult to determine the nature of the relationships between groups. However, subsequent research allowed the researcher to identify the relationship between the potential community group participants (See Figure 5.5 for a map of the relationships between the different potential evaluation participants).

Figure 5.5. A map of the potential evaluation participants in Laggan.



(Author, 1998)

The outline of community groups active in Laggan in Figure 5.5 is not exhaustive. There are other groups[20], all of whom make a valuable contribution to the community and all of whom participated indirectly in the evaluation process, given their general focus on a particular event/s.

[20] The Sheep Dog Trials Group, the Summer Club and the Scottish Country Dancing Groups, etc.

3. Contact is established with potential evaluation participants

The researcher spent the first two weeks at the end of February and in early March 1997 making contact with all the different potential evaluation participants. Laggan residents were contacted through the 'Splash' (the local community newsletter). The researcher also met with all the local community groups or where this was not possible, with a representative/representatives from the group, a time consuming task, but one which served to ensure that each group was equally informed.

4. Potential participants are invited to participate in the evaluation process

The researcher invited all the potential participants identified to take part in the evaluation process. The key issue arising for the majority of potential participants was the nature of participation that would be required. The consensus among potential local participants was that they did not want any additional community meetings/workshops as a result of the evaluation. Local groups and individuals were of the opinion that community meetings had been 'used to death', and were frequently poorly attended and by the same people. It was also the case that individual group members[21] (although prepared to meet individually with the researcher), did not want any additional group meetings as a result of the evaluation[22]. The researcher subsequently agreed to use the forum of existing meetings to implement and facilitate the evaluation. For pragmatic reasons (the time and costs involved and the distances representatives would have to travel), the participation of outside development agencies was limited to interviews.

Potential local participants were also concerned that the researcher ensure that the evaluation findings be made readily available locally. The researcher therefore committed to ensure that the overall findings would be compiled in a report for the community in Laggan.

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[21] There was one member of a community group who stated that she did not want to be involved in the evaluation. Their name was noted and they were not contacted.

[22] This lack of enthusiasm is hardly surprising given that many of those involved in community groups in Laggan are involved in more than one group and so it was not uncommon that several people might have to attend at least one and perhaps two evening meetings in a week.

A copy of the report was also to be sent to every local community group with additional copies held in the community office. In one instance, a local group (Laggan Forestry Initiative) also asked the researcher to prepare a separate paper outlining the key findings relating to their operation and development.

5. Identification of the objectives of the evaluation participants

The objectives of the various local community groups were identified through discussion. The objectives of the wider community of Laggan were determined though informal meetings with local people in the local shop, the pub and on the road. This process was only possible because of the small number of people involved. Conducted this way the process of objective identification also gave each individual an opportunity to identify their objectives in their own terms, rather than as part of a larger group.

6. Identification of the terms of reference, evaluation questions and nature and form of the evaluation feedback required

The formal and informal meetings with local participants highlighted the need to encourage those local residents not involved in community activities to become involved in the evaluation process. Other issues identified through these discussions included the need for more co-ordination between different groups and for more information to be made available to the wider community in Laggan. The evaluation terms of reference were developed based on these issues and through discussions with a selection of the most active[23] local community groups.

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[23] The term 'most active' was defined for the purposes of this research in terms of the regularity of meeting. The evaluation focused on the operation of Laggan Forestry Initiative (LFI) and of Laggan Community Partnership (LCP) since during the evaluation LFI were meeting weekly and sometimes two and three times during a particular week, while LCP meet at least on a monthly basis.

7. Prioritisation of the evaluation questions

The sheer number of local groups in Laggan, their conditions for participation (no community meetings and no additional group meetings) together with the strict time limitations imposed on the evaluation, meant it was not possible for all groups to participate to the same extent in the evaluation process. A decision was therefore made with the agreement of all of the local community groups to involve all groups but to focus particularly on the three most active community groups.

8. Outline the data collection necessary

The nature and extent of the data collection required to address the evaluation questions was identified jointly with a number of community groups at the same time as the evaluation questions were identified.

9. Data Collection

Data was collected from a variety of sources using a variety of techniques many of which were ongoing throughout the entire process of PEF implementation. In order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this data at least three different data sources were used (where possible) together with a variety of data collection techniques. This enabled the researcher to ensure the reliability of data sources.

1) Interviews

- With 6 local residents none of whom were members of any local community group. (See Appendix 3 for full details).
- With 18 local residents who are members of local community groups (exactly half of these individuals are members of more than one community group thus, ensuring that at least a third of all community group committee members of the six most active community groups were interviewed). These interviews were generally conducted in the interviewees' homes. This atmosphere was conducive to conversation and the interviews ranged over a very broad range of issues. These interviews also broadened as other family members were drawn

into the discussion. These broader family discussions were particularly interesting since they identified the range of different views that existed within households. The informal and extended nature of many of these interviews effectively precluded the use of a tape recorder and necessitated the researcher taking simple notes which were written up more fully after the interview. This loss of accuracy was however, seen to be adequately compensated for by a greater degree of interviewee frankness.

- With the two part time community staff
- With nine local development agency representatives

All of these interviews followed a similar semi-structured format and were analysed according to the evaluation questions identified in step 6 of the Laggan PEF.

2) Review of existing documentary information

- Access to this information (in the form of minutes of meetings, reports, funding applications) was complicated by the fact that it was held by different individuals within each group. It was also the case that this information was somewhat limited and in many cases incomplete.

3) Round table focus group discussions (facilitated by the researcher)

- At a variety of ongoing community groups meetings.

4) Participant observation

- At ongoing community group meetings (this provided interesting insights into the way different community groups operated and their relationships with each other). (See Appendix 3 for full details.)

5) Informal meetings and discussions

- with the two part time community staff
- with local people in the shop, the pub, the Luncheon Club and on the road,

These meetings provided an important source of information. They also provided an important mechanism for some local people to make their views known to the researcher.

6) A diary kept by the researcher

7) Workshops

- Two workshop sessions were held with the older local primary school pupils

10. Tidy up and categorise the data collected

The data collected was analysed and categorised by the researcher as it was collected. The data was categorised under a number of key issues related to the objectives of the evaluation. Key issues included: who it is that constitutes the community; the nature of local participation; the need for a community mandate; the need for more local coordination.

11. Ongoing presentation and discussion of the findings of the evaluation

The interim analysis, which resulted from this ongoing categorisation, was presented through the course of the PEF implementation at various community group meetings, where it was the cause of considerable heated debate among committee members. The researcher who facilitated these discussions kept extensive notes of these discussions. These discussions also generated ideas about how some of the issues raised could be addressed. These ideas were noted by community groups members present who agreed the actions necessary to advance these ideas.

12. Undertake further data collection and analysis (where necessary)

Data collection and analysis continued as the community groups discussed the ongoing findings. These community group discussions were subsequently analysed according the various key issues previously identified.

13. Further presentation and discussion of the ongoing evaluation findings

Once the process of data collection had been completed an overall outline of all the various findings and potential solutions identified through community group discussions was prepared and once again used to facilitate discussions with various community group members. These discussions were subsequently incorporated into the draft outline. (The researcher also prepared a specific presentation of the evaluation findings for the Forestry Initiative, in response to their request).

14. Identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations

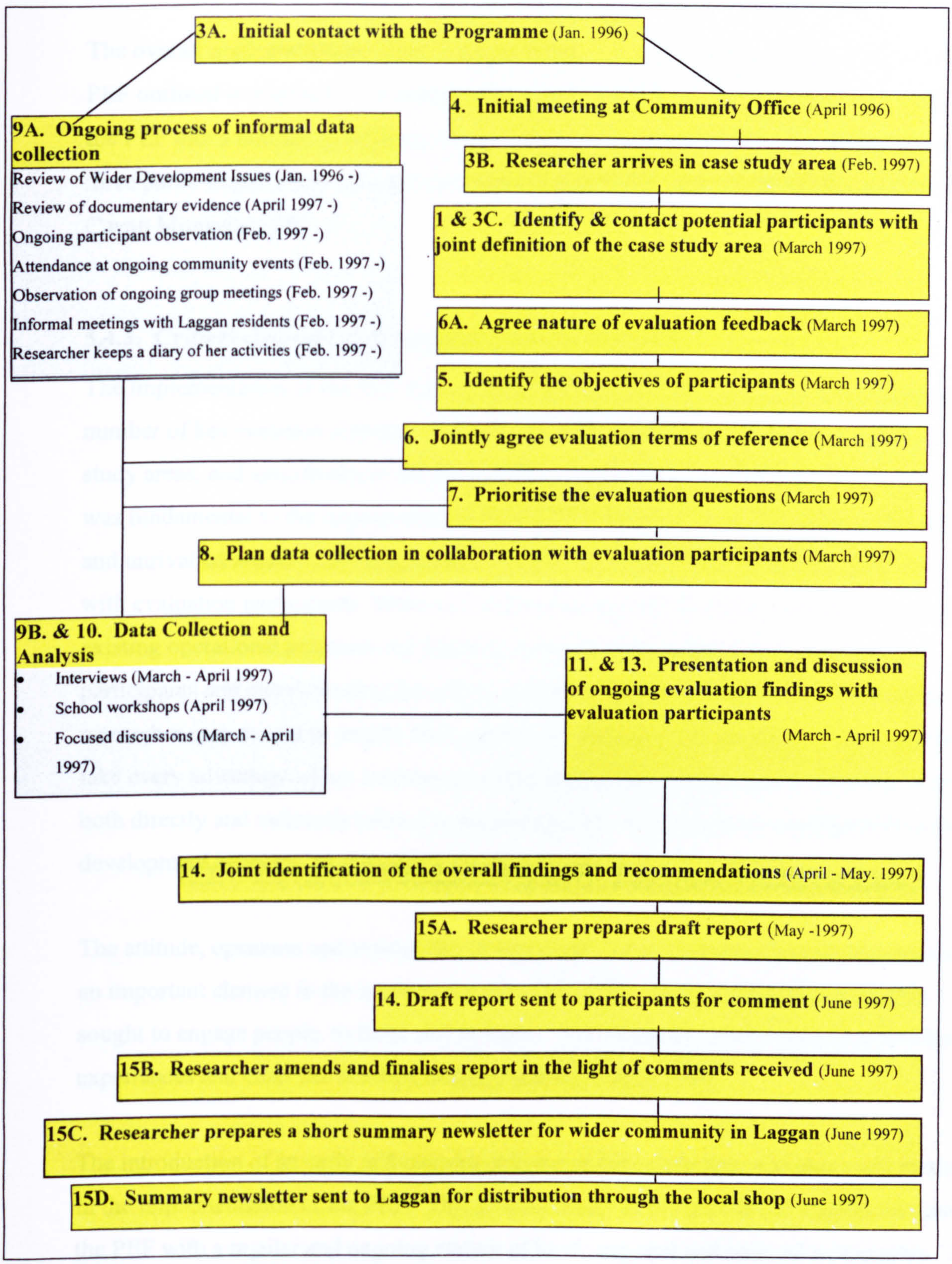
The outlines were amended and subsequently used as the basis of the final report, which was completed by the researcher after leaving Laggan. The researcher subsequently sent the report to each community group for comment.

15. Final presentations of the evaluation findings and recommendations

The report was finalised in the light of comments received and a final report sent to each community group and agency representative interviewed. Financial constraints prohibited the researcher from returning to present the final report and main findings in person. Informal comments received (from Laggan) following the receipt of the report did however lead the researcher to question the relevance of the report format. In response the researcher prepared a shorter four page summary newsletter which was sent to the Community Office for community wide dissemination (see Appendix 4).

Figure 5.6 outlines the implementation of the PEF in Laggan and attaches dates to each stage. The numbers relate the stages in the implementation of the Laggan PEF to the different stages of the PEF outlined in Figure 4.7. The sequence of the stages differs from the PEF outlined in Figure 4.7 and differs from the implementation of the Cavan Monaghan PEF outlined in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.6. An outline of the implementation of the PEF in Laggan



The overall implementation of the Laggan PEF is however broadly similar to the 15 stage PEF outlined in Figure 4.7. It differs in relation to the sub-division of stages 3, 9 and 15 of the PEF into a number of different parts. Stage 3 of the Laggan PEF was subdivided into three parts, stages 9 into two parts and stage 15 into three parts in the a similar way to the Cavan Monaghan PEF.

5.4.3. Critical elements in the implementation of the PEF

The implementation of the PEF was different for each case study. There were, however, a number of key common elements. For example, the location of the researcher in the case study areas, and specifically in the project offices throughout the implementation processes was fundamental to the implementation of the PEF. It provided the researcher with unique and unrivalled access to the case studies, thereby facilitating regular and extended contact with evaluation participants. Moreover it provided opportunities for ongoing observation of existing operational practices and meetings and for informal discussions with project participants and others visiting the offices of both initiatives. In addition, it offered the researcher easy access to project files and documentation. The researcher also sought to take every advantage of her location to undertake ongoing observation at a variety of events both directly and indirectly related to the project (e.g. observation of meetings with outside development agencies, attendance at the church sale, etc.).

The attitude, openness and availability of the researcher to evaluation participants was also an important element in the implementation of the PEF. Aware of this, the researcher sought to engage people, to listen and to learn. The researcher also sought to record her experiences and chart her learning through keeping a daily diary.

The introduction of an early and ongoing process of data collection was also a key element in the implementation of the PEF. This process began in advance of the implementation of the PEF with a regular and ongoing review of local, regional and national newspapers. This

was done in order to place ongoing development in the case study areas in a wider regional, national and international context.

The identification of potential participants was another complicated but crucial element in the whole process of implementation of the PEF, as was the selection of actual participants. In the case of the implementation of the Cavan Monaghan PEF, complications in the identification of potential participants were caused by a delay in access to the necessary information. In Laggan by contrast, the complications were caused by the amorphous nature of some local community groups, who were difficult to identify and trace, meeting as they did only infrequently in group members' homes. This process of identification eventually did, however, result in the naming of a very large number of potential participants in each case study. In an ideal situation, all these potential participants would then have been invited to participate in the evaluation process.

The sheer number of potential participants, together with the level of resources required to facilitate a participatory approach of this scale, effectively meant that it was impossible to provide equal opportunities for participation to all potential participants. Difficult decisions had to be made, firstly about which potential participants would be invited to participate and secondly, what form this participation would take. Eventually, it was decided to concentrate resources on ensuring the active and ongoing participation of those potential evaluation participants most centrally involved in the delivery of the initiatives under evaluation: CMRDCS members and staff in the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme, and local residents and members of local community groups in Laggan. This decision to concentrate on the participation of those more centrally involved in the evaluation process was based on the belief that these groups were the project participants most likely to be able to influence changes in the delivery of the initiatives. Opportunities were also provided for the more passive participation by other potential participant groups, including surveys of project promoters in the Cavan Monaghan PEF and interviews with other development agencies in the Laggan PEF.

Interviews were another key element of the data collection process in both case studies. The quality of these interviews was critically dependent on the attitudes of the interviewees. As such, all interviews were conducted at the interviewee's convenience and in their choice of venue and location. The views and opinions of interviewees were recorded in the form of direct quotes[24] thereby enabling interviewees voices to be clearly heard, and interviews to be analysed according to key words and issues.

The discussions (facilitated largely by the researcher) at ongoing meetings within the case studies were another key element in the implementation of the PEF. These discussions were often heated because they focused on issues of very local interest about which local people tended to have very definite opinions. They also provided a good source of direct information and an important mechanism through which the evaluation process could be directed and the ongoing evaluation findings could be discussed and analysed by project participants. In some instances, these discussions also resulted in a small number of direct changes in operational practices. In other instances the heated nature of these discussions tended to linger in the minds of participants longer than any formal presentation of ongoing evaluation findings would have. These discussions also provided the researcher with an opportunity to observe the ways in which different individuals interact with one another in a group setting.

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[24] These quotes were taken directly from the original interviews and discussions. In order to respect the confidentiality of the interviewees the quotes were identified simply in terms of the interviewee type (community group member, local resident, local development agency representative, etc.). Where the identity of a particular interviewee would have been apparent from a quote, the quote was modified to protect their identity. The evaluator also took a decision at this point (given that the purpose of the evaluation was not to take sides) to omit the use of quotes which could be seen to reinforce personal enmities or apportion blame.

5.5 SOME KEY THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THIS CHAPTER

5.5.1 Theoretical Issues

5.5.1.1. What it is that constitutes a community?

The community in the Cavan Monaghan case study, in principle at least, constituted all those individuals and groups that lived and worked in County Cavan and County Monaghan (approximately 100,000 persons). In reality the sheer scale, number, distribution and diversity of people in Cavan Monaghan meant that it was impossible to view Cavan Monaghan as a community. It was rather a collection of communities, thereby supporting Keane & O'Cinneide's (1986) and Chambers & McBeth's (1992) argument that a community is much more than a collection of people sharing some common space. The community in the Laggan case study in contrast involved a total population of 204 persons. Even within this relatively small number of people it was clear that there were substantial divisions. This finding endorses Wright's (1992) and Cohen's (1985) dismissal of Tonnies' notion of a rural community as a relatively simple homogeneous society in favour of a recognition of rural communities as a microcosm of wider societal processes involving a whole range of disparate groups and individuals often with very divergent understandings and beliefs.

Opportunities for participation in explicitly community-orientated activities clearly vary substantially, depending on the nature and ethos of a particular community organisation. In Laggan, for example, some community organisations were open to all residents and held open meetings, while others had more limited membership. The ability of individuals to participate in community activities in Laggan was also clearly affected by whether they were perceived as a 'local' or as an 'incomer'. Given that the majority of current Laggan residents are only first or second-generation residents this was a curious categorisation. (More recently and perhaps in response to this lack of an inclusive focus, a number of the more recent younger residents together with others from a neighbouring village did start a

new group, in a move which was generally resisted by the more established groups.) The existence of these types of categorisations and deep divisions within such a small number of people not only support Keane & O'Cinneide's (1986) and Chambers & McBeth's (1992) argument that the image of small harmonious rural communities is just that: an image. The existence of these types of divisions also highlights the need and the importance of identifying and involving all the different interests and groups in a particular development initiative.

5.5.1.2 Key elements of rural community development

Chambers (1992; 1983) identified the quality and nature of participation as a critical element in rural community development. The quality of participation varied substantially particularly in relation to decision-making structures within the case studies. Participation in the main decision-making structures of the Cavan Monaghan case study for example, was limited to a small group (of middle income professional males), with a core group holding the key positions. The situation in the Laggan case study, despite the number of groups, was broadly similar with a small group of individuals (both male and female in this case), holding a number of key positions in a number of local groups. As such, particular individuals can be seen to have had a substantial influence over the initiatives. The role and strength of influence of particular key individuals as 'gatekeepers' is therefore a key issue within any consideration of rural community development.

5.5.2. Methodological Issues

5.5.2.1 The evaluation of rural community development

The successful evaluation of a particular rural community development initiative is clearly dependent on the ability of the researcher to access the necessary information. Access to this information is as this research demonstrates not always straight forward. Access to the case studies was for example dependent on the support of a small number of key individuals involved, not all of who were easily identified at the outset of the evaluation, in Laggan in particular. Meanwhile in the Cavan Monaghan case study there

were a number of different levels of access, each of which had to be negotiated sequentially. At the first level, it was a relatively straight forward to negotiate access to the overall operation of the Co-operative, but substantially more complicated to negotiate the next level of access to the project files themselves.

The substantial resources involved in the use of participatory approaches have been noted by a number of different commentators including Chambers (1995) and Fetterman *et al.* (1996). The follow-on implications of this observation for the evaluation of larger scale rural community development initiatives have, however, to date received little detailed consideration. The large scale of the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme for example, and the sheer number of different stakeholder groups involved effectively prohibits the use of a detailed participatory evaluation approach. This research suggests that detailed participatory evaluation is clearly more suited to smaller scale community development initiatives or particular sub elements of larger scale initiatives. In case of the larger scale Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme for example, a decision was made to focus on a participatory evaluation of the organisation (CMRDCS) established to implement the Programme, and the key stakeholders and stakeholder groups involved with this organisation. It simply was not practically possible with the resources (time and finances) available to undertake a fully inclusive of participatory evaluation approach across the two counties. Where the scale and number of people involved in a particular stakeholder group (for example in Cavan Monaghan the number and diversity of Project Promoters involved in the Programme) were very large, efforts were focused on the involvement of a representative sample of each stakeholder type. This may indeed be a way to incorporate participatory evaluation principles into more general evaluation approaches.

5.5.2.2 The evaluation of rural community development processes

The extent and nature of participation in a particular development initiative is clearly more difficult to determine the larger the scale of the particular initiative, particularly if considerations of quality and representativeness issues (i.e. ensuring all the different

stakeholders are represented in a meaningful way) suggested by Curtin & Varley (1991) are taken account. It was indeed impossible to determine the nature of participation in the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme as a proportion of the total population. The sheer number and location of actual participants and the inherent financial and time costs associated with contacting this number of participants effectively also prohibited the possibility of actively engaging all these groups in the evaluation process. Assessing participation among Cavan Monaghan Board Members did allow, the identification of different issues, conflicts and levels of participation at Board level.

5.5.2.3 Evaluation techniques/methods

In relation to the methods and techniques used to implement the evaluation, interviews proved as Malhotra (1993) suggests a particularly useful way to identify key issues that might be difficult to reach by other means. The small scale and the small number of people involved in the development activities in Laggan were such that some of these key issues became personalised and potentially divisive. In this instance and at this scale the use of focus groups facilitated by the researcher provided a particularly good mechanism for the discussion of sensitive local issues in a less emotive way. There is little prior evidence to suggest that focus groups have been considered as a mechanism through which sensitive local issues might be discussed and it would be interesting to see if this could be developed and explored more fully within the context of ongoing local development initiatives in particular. It was also the case that the use of workshops in Laggan provided a mechanism through which school children could participate in the evaluation process.

5.5.2.4 An analysis of the role of the researcher

The action-orientated nature of this research together with the process-orientated nature of the PEF meant that researcher could not simply observe. Participation by the researcher was as suggested by Yin (1994), essential. The involvement and participation of the researcher in the day to day operations of both case studies was indeed as Reason (1994) argued essential to the effective implementation of the evaluation.

The active involvement of the researcher in the ongoing operations of the case studies also had a number of additional and important benefits that should be acknowledged. In particular, the developing perceptions of the researcher as a potential contributor and the research as a mutually beneficial process had an important role in the development of a broader acceptance among case study participants of the researcher and a greater willingness to participate in the evaluation process. This acceptance in turn enabled the researcher to attend ongoing meetings and discussions not always directly relevant to the evaluation, thereby gaining significant additional insights into particular operational issues.

5.5.2.5 The challenges the research posed for the researcher

Both sets of case study participants frequently wanted and demanded responses from the researcher. This need for participation by the researcher challenged the objectivity of the researcher both in her role as the researcher and in her examination of participatory evaluation, an issue Patton (1997) identified in his work. These challenges in turn prompted particular feelings of vulnerability within the researcher particularly as the researcher was at a distance from academic sources of support. In the absence of these external supports the researcher sought to channel these emotions into an ongoing commitment to the production of something with a practical as well as an academic relevance.

In more general terms the experience and knowledge gained by the researcher in the implementation of the evaluation in the first case study also influenced the researcher's confidence and competence in the implementation of the second case study thereby supporting Carter & Delamont's (1996) belief that fieldwork and other qualitative data collection methods change the investigator.

5.6. THE NEXT STAGE

The next stage in the assessment of the PEF is an examination of the outcomes which resulted from its implementation in each of the case studies. The outcomes of the PEF

include process outcomes (outcomes which result from the process of implementation of the PEF) and product outcomes (which relate to the findings and recommendations which result from the completion of the formal evaluation process).

The outcomes of the PEF can occur in the immediate to short term or in the longer term depending on local circumstances. To comprehensively assess the outcomes of the PEF it is necessary to examine outcomes in both the immediate and in the longer term.

The two chapters that follow aim therefore to assess comprehensively the immediate and short-term outcomes of the PEF in each case study. Chapter 6 examines the outcomes of the process of implementation of PEF in each case study while Chapter 7 outlines the results (i.e. the findings and recommendations) which followed from the implementation of the PEF in the case studies. Chapter 8 in contrast examines the longer (some 3-6 months after completion of the evaluation) term effect/outcomes of the PEF on each case study. This chapter is largely based on the reports prepared for the case studies on completion of the review. These two reports are therefore included within this research as Appendices 5 and 6 respectively.

CHAPTER 6. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEF

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the outcomes that resulted from the PEF implementation process in both the Cavan Monaghan case study and the Laggan case study. This chapter draws extensively on the previously identified aims of the PEF process identified in Chapter 4. These aims included the promotion of collaboration between evaluation participants, the generation of knowledge and learning opportunities and the release of creativity and empowerment of participants. The chapter also builds on Chapter 5 where the mechanisms by which the PEF was implemented in each of these case studies were outlined. The results (i.e. the findings and recommendations) of the implementation of the PEF are detailed separately within Chapter 7.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 6.2 and Section 6.3 identify and examine the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF in the Cavan Monaghan and Laggan case studies respectively. Section 6.4 details some of the theoretical and methodological issues arising from this chapter for the research in general. Section 6.5 concludes with an examination of the nature and extent of the outcomes that resulted from the implementation of the PEF in the case studies.

The PEF (conceived within the constructivist paradigm) moves away from the conception of evaluation as a measure of success or failure in relation to pre-ordained objectives, towards the recognition of evaluation as a learning process and as a mechanism for promoting increased levels of understanding and ultimately action (this argument was detailed in Chapter 3). This emphasis on the creation of opportunities for learning and improved understanding within the PEF highlights the importance of the process of implementation of the PEF. The process of implementation of the PEF was recognised within Chapter 4 as an important mechanism for participation through which the consciousness of project participants could be raised and project participants could be empowered. The nature of this

participatory process was also seen to provide practical opportunities for the promotion and improvement of dialogue and negotiation between project participants thereby contributing to increased levels of understanding and mutual trust. Participation in the evaluation process also provides a series of opportunities for learning, which in turn increases project participants' capacity and levels of confidence.

The outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF took three forms:
1) the expected outcomes, 2) the less tangible process-orientated outcomes and 3) the unanticipated practical actions as a result of the PEF implementation process. This review assumes (unless otherwise stated) that the expected outcomes, for example the outcomes of the processes of data collection and categorisation occurred as expected, and focuses instead on the identification of the more intangible outcomes and unforeseen practical actions that resulted from the process of implementation of the PEF. The less tangible outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF (identified from Chapter 5) include increased levels of participation in ongoing community activities, increased levels of mutual understanding and trust, in addition to increased levels of confidence and increased skills levels. All these outcomes can in turn be seen to relate to the creation of the social products identified in Chapter 2 as central to the process of rural community development. As such, the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF can be seen to have a potentially significant contribution to make to both the evaluation and to the ongoing processes of rural community development within each case study.

It is the nature of the PEF not to pre-determine who it is that does the learning, and as such, no examination of these outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF would be complete without consideration of the issue of to whom these outcomes relate - in other words, do they relate to evaluation participants in general, to specific participant groups, to the researcher or to a combination of these people. Each stage in the implementation of the PEF is therefore examined for each case study, to identify what, if any, outcomes resulted from the implementation of this element of the process and who was affected by these outcomes. These outcomes are classified under a series of broad types which include:

increased levels of participation, increased levels of awareness, increased levels of mutual understanding and trust, increased levels of confidence and increased skills levels and practical action to solve problems. (These outcomes types were identified with reference to the key processes within rural community development outlined in Chapter 2 and the aims of the PEF outlined in Chapter 4.) See Figure 6.1 for an outline of the matrix used to identify the nature and extent of the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF.

Figure 6.1. The matrix used to identify the nature of the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF

Participant Type / Outcome Type	a) All evaluation participants	b) A particular participant group	c) Participant groups	d) The researcher
a) increased levels of participation	P1 aa	P1 ab	P1 ac	P1 ad
b) increased levels of awareness	P1 ba	P1 bb	P1 bc	P1 bd
c) increased levels of mutual understanding and trust	P1 ca	P1 cb	P1 cc	P1 cd
d) increased levels of confidence	P1 da	P1 db	P1 dc	P1 dd
e) increased skills levels	P1 ea	P1 eb	P1 ec	P1 ee
f) practical action to solve problems	P1 fa	P1 fb	P1 fc	P1 fd

Key:

- P1 refers to the first stage in the implementation process, i.e. the identification of the boundaries of the evaluation; P2 refers to the second stage and so on...
- i refers to the type of outcomes (a-f on the vertical axis)
- j refers to the type of participant (a-d on the horizontal axis).

The outcome types were identified in relation to the key processes involved in rural community development identified in section 2.7 and in relation to the purposes of evaluation identified in section 3.4. Each element of the process of implementation of the PEF was subsequently examined in relation to these outcome types using this matrix. The information necessary to undertake this review was largely drawn from the researcher's diary and from transcripts of interviews and discussions held throughout the duration of the evaluation process. The interview and discussion transcripts were categorised and analysed according to the evaluation questions identified in stage 5 of the PEF. The findings of this analysis are discussed in the following two sections.

6.2. THE OUTCOMES FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEF IN THE CAVAN MONAGHAN CASE STUDY

The outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF are examined in relation to the different stages in the 15 stage PEF outlined in Figure 4.6 and in relation to the actual implementation of the PEF in Cavan Monaghan as detailed in Figure 5.4.

6.2.1. The outcomes of implementation in Cavan Monaghan

6.2.1.1. The identification of the boundaries of the evaluation

The processes of identification of the geographical boundaries of the evaluation and the potential evaluation participants were both relatively simple administrative tasks given that the boundaries of the evaluation were pre-defined by the nature of the LEADER Programme, and that CMRDCS, the central body responsible for the overall administration and delivery of the programme was broadly supportive of the evaluation.

6.2.1.2. The identification of the potential evaluation participants

The process of establishing contact with potential evaluation participants was more complicated. The delay in getting access to the necessary information raised the researcher's

awareness of the central and controlling role of the CMRDCS Board within the Programme (see Section 5.3). This delay did, however, provide additional informal opportunities for meetings between the researcher and CMRDCS Board members and staff and therefore contributed to increased levels of understanding between these participants and the researcher.

6.2.1.3. The establishment of contact with potential participants

Given that it was not possible to include all the potential participants identified, the process of issuing invitations to participate in the evaluation process was complicated by the need to be selective. The decision only to include a selection of potential participants and the subsequent selection process did, however, increase general levels of awareness of the diverse and diffuse nature of the groups involved in the Programme and of the complications this can cause in the administration and evaluation of the Programme. It was at this point also that Board members attached a series of conditions to their participation in the evaluation process (i.e. no additional Board level meetings as a result of the evaluation process). These conditions highlighted the frustrations of Board members in relation to the number of meetings they were expected to attend. The establishment of conditions of participation by Board members also raised the profile and awareness levels of this issue among Board members, staff and the researcher alike. The introduction of these conditions also decreased the researcher's level of confidence and trust in the willingness of Board members to participate in particular and in her ability to conduct a participatory evaluation in Cavan Monaghan in general.

6.2.1.4. The issue of invitations to participate in the evaluation process

The process of identification of the objectives of the evaluation participants had a number of outcomes for various different participant groups. The use of the findings of informal discussions with individual participants increased individual's levels of confidence in their knowledge and beliefs and more generally increased levels of participation. The findings of these discussions were also subsequently used to facilitate discussion at a group level,

discussions that in turn fostered debate and increased levels of awareness and understanding among those participating in the meetings.

6.2.1.5. The identification of the objectives of participants

The identification of the objectives of the different evaluation participants was complex. The main outcomes of this process were the identification of a whole range of divergent opinions about the objectives of the Programme among the different groups and within groups.

6.2.1.6. The identification of the evaluation terms of reference

The processes of identification of the evaluation terms of reference, questions and the nature and form of feedback required were complex. The decision to focus the evaluation on community development was a particularly significant outcome of this process. This decision marked a recognition and increased awareness at Board level of the importance of the community development element of the LEADER Programme. It also marked a generally increased level of understanding of the difficulties that exist in determining the outcomes of the community development processes and justifying expenditure on such processes.

6.2.1.7. The prioritisation of evaluation questions

The prioritising of the evaluation questions was conducted using the format of round table discussions. The discussions served to increase awareness and highlight the existence of a range of different views. They also served to provide opportunities for additional and ongoing participation among evaluation participants. It was also the case that previously reticent individual participants (in these group discussions) were more prepared to vocalise their views and opinions, reflecting a growing level of confidence (gained through their ongoing participation in the evaluation implementation process and through the support of the group).

6.2.1.8. The development of a data collection strategy

The outcomes of the process of preparation of the data collection strategy were limited by the minimal participation of evaluation participants in this process. The evaluation participants preferred to leave this to the researcher. A number of individual participants were, however, prepared to comment on a draft of the strategy. This lack of willingness to participate served to reinforce the researcher's awareness of the dependency of the PEF on the vagaries of evaluation participants. The researcher therefore had to prepare the strategy alone, which she then discussed with evaluation participants. The outcomes of this process included a data collection strategy and a growing awareness of the lack of interest at Board level in anything except the evaluation findings/results.

6.2.1.9. The process of data collection (stage 9 and stage 12 of the PEF)

The process of data collection began in advance of the commencement of the formal evaluation process with a regular review of national and local newspapers. The actual process of data collection involved a variety of techniques including a review of secondary material, ongoing informal discussions, participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions. All of these techniques produced a variety of outcomes, one of which was the early introduction of an ongoing process of data collection which increased the researcher's general level of awareness of the wider issues influencing the Programme and its participants. This process also served to increase the researcher's confidence and level of understanding of the way in which different evaluation participants behaved. This process of review of existing documentary evidence also resulted in the production of a review of the background and establishment of the Programme, a review that was in turn used by Programme staff to supply visitors with an overview of the Programme development.

The outcomes of the ongoing discussions (both formal and informal) between the researcher and Programme staff in particular, included the development of good inter-personal relationships, as a result of which the researcher was able to increase her level of understanding of the ongoing frustrations and problems of the staff. It was also the case that these discussions provided Programme staff with some additional time for reflection,

discussion and debate. The outcomes of this process within the process of evaluation included the identification of a series of key staff concerns, which in turn led to the identification of some practical potential mechanisms to address these concerns. The researcher in collaboration with project staff, subsequently developed these mechanisms. Mechanisms identified in this way included: a classification system for monitoring the development of community groups, a simple daily diary (monitoring the work undertaken by Programme staff), and a mechanism for recording and monitoring inquiries from community groups. The involvement of staff in the generation of solutions to problems and issues identified within the evaluation also had the effect of ensuring the relevance of these solutions and the commitment of staff to their implementation. As such, the outcomes of the process of ongoing discussion with Programme staff included both increases in the confidence and skills of the staff through their development and introduction of practical action, and new practices within the Programme in general.

The process of participant observation began as soon as the researcher arrived in the case study area. The presence of the researcher at Board and Subcommittee meetings served to remind Board members of the ongoing evaluation in progress. The presence of the researcher in the Programme offices was quickly accepted, with the researcher treated as a member of staff. After a short period, the researcher was invited to attend ongoing meetings between the Programme Manager and the two Community Development Officers. The researcher initially undertook the role of participant observer at these meetings. As these meeting progressed it quickly became apparent that the staff expected the researcher to contribute to these meetings. The role of the researcher therefore changed from participant observer, to reluctant participant to an active participant at these meetings. This change in the role of the researcher marked an increased awareness by staff of the potential of the evaluation and of the researcher to make a positive contribution to ongoing developments within the Programme.

Interviews provided all those selected for interview with a unique opportunity to participate in the evaluation, express their opinions and know that these opinions would be presented

anonymously at Board level. The open ended nature of these interviews provided interviewees with an opportunity to raise a whole range of broad issues and as such raised awareness of issues which otherwise might have been overlooked. Board member interviews, for example, provided new Board members in particular with an opportunity to express their opinions and to identify and detail the particular problems they were experiencing as new members (e.g. identifying the criteria used to evaluate project proposals, getting to know other Board members, etc.).

Interviews with group project promoters also facilitated a process of negotiation and dialogue between group members in order to try and agree a group opinion. It raised awareness of the existence of divergent views within a group. Where a group was unable to agree a single viewpoint, it was encouraged to acknowledge the existence of a range of different viewpoints, with each opinion duly noted.

In some situations, this was the first time many of these groups had acknowledged the existence of internal differences. This acknowledgement and the ensuing debates which resulted from the interview process can therefore be seen to have provided groups with an opportunity to listen and to learn from and about one another, thereby increasing general levels of understanding between group members.

A central element in the process of data collection was a series of discussions held at Board level that focused on the ongoing findings of the evaluation process. These discussions provided an opportunity for all Board members to participate in the evaluation process. It was the case that a number of Board members who rarely express their opinions at Board level were drawn into these debates which continued after the Board meetings. These discussions were unlike general Board level discussions in that they ranged over a variety of issues (rather than a single issue) and thereby offered opportunities to discuss an extensive range of issues and the relationships between them, promoting increased levels of understanding among Board members. Individual Board members often held strong and divergent opinions on a number of the issues raised and as such these discussions led to

lively debates and interchanges between members. These debates between Board members meant that individual members' views and opinions were challenged and these individuals forced to question their views in a way that would not normally happen at Board level.

6.2.1.10. Data categorisation

The process of data categorisation and analysis commenced as soon as the process of data collection began and continued throughout the ongoing presentation and discussion of evaluation findings. This process was largely undertaken by the researcher within some small input from Programme staff and individual Board members in the form of comments on the classification categories proposed by the researcher. The main outcomes of this process were the development of a series of categories and the subsequent categorisation of data.

6.2.1.11. Presentation and discussion of the evolving evaluation findings (stage 11 and stage 13 of the PEF

The process of presentation and discussion of the evaluation findings continued throughout the evaluation process following the commencement of data collection and analysis. This enabled the identification of issues of common concern among Board members and staff. The Board subsequently agreed to a number of practical actions to address some of these concerns. These changes, while relatively simple to implement, had significant consequences. The introduction of name badges at meetings, for example, marked a recognition of the difficulties faced by new Board members joining an organisation which had already been in existence for six years. Similarly the circulation of the minutes of the Assessment Subcommittee meeting in advance of the Board meeting marked a recognition of the significant proportion of Board members' time spent on project assessment[25] during meetings, time which could otherwise be spent on the discussion of more strategic or policy orientated issues.

[25] Assessing projects that had already been assessed by the Assessment Subcommittee.

These ongoing discussions and presentations also highlighted the complexities associated with community development. As a result of this, evaluation participants' understanding of the difficulties involved in community development was enhanced and reinforced.

6.2.1.12. The identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations

The process of identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations was an extension and synthesis of the ongoing discussions throughout the evaluation process. This process served to both reinforce and reconfirm the ongoing findings of the evaluation. Board members were unable to agree the main findings of the evaluation process, so it was agreed that the researcher would include all the findings within the final evaluation report. This inability of Board members to agree served as a reminder to Board members, staff and the researcher alike of the ongoing existence of divergent opinions among Board members.

6.2.1.13. The final presentation

Among the main outcomes of the presentation of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations was a heated debate among Board members - a debate which raised the general awareness levels among participants and highlighted a number of key issues of concern which exist within the operation and delivery of the Programme.

6.2.2. A summary of the main outcomes of the implementation process in Cavan Monaghan

The main outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF in the Cavan Monaghan case study included the creation of a series of ongoing opportunities for participation by Programme participants in the evaluation process and indirectly in the Programme. This participation of Programme participants in the evaluation process increased participants' level of awareness of the difficult issues facing the Programme. This increased level of awareness among evaluation participants was detected through the interview process and through ongoing and informal discussions with participants. Individual evaluation participants were provided with opportunities for discussion. The process drew particular

attention to the complexities involved in the delivery of the community development element of the Programme in particular.

The implementation process also created a series of ongoing and additional opportunities for debate and discussion among evaluation participants. These discussions have increased levels of dialogue, collaboration, understanding and trust among and between project participants. These increased levels of dialogue and collaboration were detected through ongoing observation of community meetings and activities throughout the evaluation process. The dependency of the researcher on the input of Programme participants also indirectly reinforced evaluation participants' level of confidence in their abilities and knowledge.

The implementation of the evaluation process also generated a number of more practical outcomes which included the production of a review of the background and establishment of the Programme and the development of a series of mechanisms to monitor both the progress of community groups and the work of the community development officers. The development of the monitoring systems was undertaken by the researcher in collaboration with the community development staff thereby ensuring the relevance of these mechanisms, and also increasing the skills and abilities of Programme staff. The presentation of the evaluation findings on an ongoing basis to the Board of CMRDCS also resulted in the implementation of a small number of changes in practices related to the operation of the Board.

6.3. THE OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEF IN THE LAGGAN CASE STUDY

The outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF are examined in relation to the different stages in the 15 stage PEF outlined in Figure 4.6 and in relation to the implementation of the PEF in Laggan detailed in Figure 5.6.

6.3.1. An examination of the outcomes of the implementation process in Laggan

6.3.1.1. The identification of the boundaries of the evaluation

The process of identification of the boundaries of the evaluation involved discussions with a number of local residents. The outcomes of this included the establishment of a rapport between local residents and the researcher. These discussions also served to practically reinforce the researcher's stated commitment to the participation and input of local residents. It was also in the nature of a small place like Laggan that word of these discussions quickly spread among potential local evaluation participants, thereby increasing local confidence/curiosity in the ability of the researcher to engage the local community in the evaluation process.

6.3.1.2. The identification of the potential evaluation participants

The number and nature of local community groups in Laggan complicated the identification of potential evaluation participants. This process of identification involved the researcher meeting intensively with local residents to determine the exact number of groups and subsequently the nature of the relationships between groups. The clear dependency of the researcher on local input had the effect of reinforcing local participants' levels of confidence in their knowledge base. The difficulties the researcher experienced in determining the exact number of groups active in Laggan increased local awareness of the shear number of groups active in Laggan.

As part of this process, the researcher also documented the background to the different community groups in Laggan and the relationships between these groups. This document was subsequently used by the two part time LCP and LFI staff to supply visitors to the community offices with a practical guide to community groups active in Laggan.

6.3.1.3. The establishment of contact with potential evaluation participants

The process of establishing contact with potential evaluation participants was crucial to the success of the evaluation. The researcher's use of 'the Splash' (the local newsletter) ensured

that each household was at the very least aware of the evaluation in progress. The evaluator also sought to meet with each community group or a representative from each group. This ensured that each group was equally well informed and aware of the evaluation. Meeting with each community group also helped to make sure that each group felt equally treated, thereby increasing levels of trust in the researcher.

6.3.1.4. The issue of invitations to participate in the evaluation process

A number of issues arose from the issue of invitations to potential evaluation participants, not least of which was the nature of the participation required for the evaluation. The researcher's acknowledgment of local concerns in this regard and her subsequent agreement to use the forum of existing meetings to implement and facilitate the evaluation can therefore be seen to have increased local participants' levels of trust in her. This acceptance in turn prompted a request that the evaluation findings should be made available locally on completion of the evaluation. In the same way, the decision to limit the involvement of outside development agencies in the Laggan PEF increased local participants' level of confidence in their own skills and knowledge base.

6.3.1.5. The identification of the objectives of participants

The formal and informal processes of local objective identification provided an opportunity for all potential participants to participate in the evaluation process. This was an opportunity that at least half the population took up in one form or other, thereby substantially increasing normal levels of local participation. The nature of this process was such that it also enabled participants to identify their objectives in their own terms, thereby reinforcing these individuals' beliefs and levels of confidence.

6.3.1.6. The identification of the evaluation terms of reference

The process of identification of the terms of reference and key evaluation questions involved a series of meetings with local participants. One of the outcomes of these meetings was the agreement of a number of key objectives for the evaluation (see Section 5.3.2 for details).

The discussions held at these meetings also enabled the identification of significant differences between local groups and between individual committee members. Additionally this process led to the identification of a small number of individuals who did not want to be involved in the evaluation process.

6.3.1.7. The prioritisation of evaluation questions

The process of prioritisation of the evaluation questions was undertaken at the same time as the identification of the evaluation objectives. The priorities of the various different participants were found to vary substantially as a result of this process. This process can therefore be seen to have raised local awareness of the difference between the priorities of different groups.

6.3.1.8. The development of a data collection strategy

The development of the methodology for conducting the evaluation was undertaken by a variety of local groups. It was developed in the light of local conditions for participation, to include a mixture of interviews with more involved and less involved local residents and with representatives of outside development agencies, ongoing discussions with community groups at their meetings with input also sought from the local youth and school children. The outcome of this process included a greater awareness among those involved in this process (local community groups and the researcher) of the diverse nature of community in Laggan and the lack of any sort of an overarching local forum to bring all these groups together to discuss ongoing developments.

6.3.1.9. The process of data collection (stages 9 and 12 of the PEF)

The data collection process used a variety of techniques, many of which were ongoing throughout the evaluation process. Interviews were an important element of this process and were conducted with a variety of participant types in particular, interviews conducted with local residents produced a series of interesting, if unforeseen, outcomes because of their location in the interviewees' homes. These local interviews which were initially semi-

structured, similar to all other interviews, tended to lengthen as the interviewees warmed to their subject. These interviews broadened as they lengthened, to include other family members, evolving into often quite heated family discussions. The discussions which resulted highlighted some of the critical inter-generational differences, raising the interviewees' and the researcher's awareness of a whole additional range of issues. The inclusion of both active[26] and less active local residents provided a unique cross section of local opinion, which contributed to increased levels of local understanding of the differences between individuals.

Interviews with outside agencies also produced a number of interesting outcomes both for the interviewees and for the wider community in Laggan. Not least of these outcomes was a better understanding of how these agencies perceive ongoing developments in Laggan and their particular organisation's relationship to these developments and to Laggan in general.

A central element of the data collection process was a series of discussions held with a number of community groups. These discussions focused on the ongoing findings of the evaluation process and ranged over a broad range of issues. These discussions provided those groups involved with an opportunity for inter-group debate on a range of diverse issues including the relationships between groups. Individual committee members often held strong and divergent opinions that led to lively debate and interchange at these meetings, thereby facilitating more informed decision making. These discussions also provided a mechanism whereby the views of some of the wider community in Laggan could be represented. One clear consequence of these meetings was a greater awareness among local group members of the need to keep the wider Laggan community informed about their activities.

The part-time Forestry Initiative and Partnership staff provided an invaluable source of information, particularly as the researcher shared an office with them during this period. The

[26] Active in terms of local development activities.

extended nature of the study enabled the development of good inter-personal relationships between the researcher and the two individuals in question which in turn ensured the researcher was kept fully informed of the variety of ongoing meetings and activities which occurred during the evaluation process and on an ongoing basis after the completion of the initial evaluation. In addition, the activities of the researcher sensitised community staff to a range of wider local concerns.

Two workshops were held with the senior pupils in the local primary school[27]. The outcomes of these workshops included the identification of a series of 'important things in and about Laggan'. These included a number of local places (specifically the Pattick Falls, Five Cairn Hill, Dun da Lamh and the Spey Dam), a variety of sporting activities and music and dancing. These workshops revealed that these children were aware of many of the issues facing Laggan, particularly those related to its location and distance from larger centres of population. As such, one of the main outcomes of these workshops was the identification of the existence of considerable potential for involvement of the school in the activities of the various community groups.

As the implementation process progressed, the number of local people aware of and curious about the evaluation and the researcher grew. A number of these individuals actively sought to participate in this process through engaging the researcher in

[27] It was not possible to arrange a similar event for older pupils given that they attend school elsewhere and are divided up amongst a whole variety of classes. Some of these older children did, however, participate in the discussions that resulted from the extended interviews with their parents.

conversation either along the road[28] or in the local pub. As the evaluation implementation progressed and levels of confidence and trust grew, community group members also sought the company of the researcher to discuss or explain issues of particular concern to them. The ongoing informal meetings and discussions that resulted provided both interesting information and invaluable insights into the relationships between the different community groups and between these groups and the wider community.

6.3.1.10. Data categorisation

The researcher undertook the process of data categorisation and analysis. The lack of involvement of evaluation participants in this process limited the outcomes of this process to the practical categorisation and analysis of data collected.

6.3.1.11. Presentations and discussions of ongoing evaluation findings (stages 11 and 13 of the PEF)

The process of ongoing presentation and discussions of the evaluation findings resulted in much-heated debate and discussion among committee members. This process raised community group members' awareness of the concerns of both the wider community in Laggan and the outside development agencies.

6.3.1.12. The identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations

The process of identification of the overall evaluation findings and recommendations was based on the selected community groups' discussions of the ongoing evaluation findings. The ultimate outcomes of these processes of discussion and debate were the identification of 7 major concerns and a series of 20 practical recommendations (See Appendix 3 for full details).

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[28] The researcher normally walked to the community office at least once or twice a day.

6.3.1.13. The final presentation

The presentation of the evaluation findings and recommendations took the form of a final report. Such was the nature of the relationship and the level of trust and understanding that had developed between the researcher and community group members, that a number of these individuals were able to contact the researcher to say that in their opinion the final report, because of its formal nature was unlikely to be read by the local community. In response to these comments the researcher prepared a short four-page newsletter of the main findings and recommendations (See Appendix 3 for full details).

6.3.2. A summary of the main outcomes of the implementation process in Laggan

The main outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF in Laggan included an increase in the number and nature of the opportunities for participation available to community groups, the wider community in Laggan and outside development agencies. The nature of this participation provided evaluation participants with an opportunity to express their opinions and views in their own terms thereby confirming participants' confidence in their own abilities and knowledge base. This in turn raised local levels of awareness of a whole range of issues of particular local concern. General levels of awareness were raised particularly in relation to the number of community groups active in Laggan. Other issues raised included the lack of co-ordination between groups and the need to keep the wider community better informed in relation to the activities of local groups. The existence of substantial difference between the aspirations of the younger and the older generation and the potential that exists to involve the local school in ongoing community developments were also identified as local concerns through this process. The process of implementation of the PEF also identified a number of local residents who did not want to become involved in the evaluation process.

The implementation process created a series of ongoing and additional opportunities for debate and discussion among evaluation participants. The local discussions, which were

often heated, promoted dialogue between individual committee members. This process of dialogue increased levels of understanding between individuals and groups and awareness of how the activities of particular groups were perceived by the wider community and by outside development agencies. The activities of the researcher also sensitised community staff to broader local issues. Moreover,the implementation of the PEF resulted in the production of a number of documents including one which reviewed the background to the establishment of the various community groups in Laggan, together with a final report and summary local newsletter which outlined the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation.

6.4. SOME THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THIS CHAPTER FOR THE RESEARCH

6.4.1 Theoretical Issues

6.4.1.1 Key elements of rural community development

Capacity building has been recognised by Murray and Dunne (1995) and Kearney *et al.* (1994) amongst others, as a critical element of rural community development. Key elements within the process of capacity building were identified by NESC (1994) as the provision of training and education opportunities. This research would suggest that capacity building could also be significantly encouraged through the provision of ongoing opportunities for discussion. Participation in ongoing discussions as part of the evaluation process in both case studies, for example, have had a significant positive effect particularly for newer case study participants who clearly become more confident and vocal participants as discussions progressed throughout the evaluation process. As such it is suggested that an increased value may need to be placed on the role of debate and discussion within the process of rural community development and within rural development theory in general.

The long-term vitality of a particular rural community is as Murray and Dunne (1990) clearly suggest about more that the completion of projects. This research would suggest that the sustainability of a particular community development initiative depends on their ability to continually attract, encourage and support new members/residents in the longer term. This need for capacity building to ensure long-term sustainability has been highlighted extensively by a number of commentators including Narayan (1993) and Shorthall and Shucksmith (1998). Interestingly, while group sustainability/survival had caused both sets of case study participants concern with few new members and particularly few younger people keen to become involved, only Cavan Monaghan had made the connection with the need for ongoing capacity building.

This research clearly supports Kearney *et al.*'s (1994) argument that the development of sufficient confidence and capacity to undertake substantial actions/projects is a slow process. Shorthall and Shucksmith (1998) and others have identified a number of key elements in this process including the willingness and openness of particular communities to recognise their needs and to take action accordingly. This research also highlights the important role that achievement can play as a mechanism through which capacity and confidence can be built. The community development that took place in Laggan was influenced in part at least from the success of the community in the ongoing provision of a television signal. From this, the community can be seen to have taken on a series of successively more ambitious projects culminating in the Forestry Project that addresses the fundamental and complex issues of land ownership. This recognition of the role achievement can play within the process of building capacity closely relates to Flora and Flora's (1990) identification of prior experience of a community development initiative as one of the key characteristics of successful community initiatives.

Keane and O'Cinneide (1986) in their work argued that idealised notions of rural communities as unified entities capable of acting consensually have contributed to a general lack of understanding and awareness of the complexities and time involved in rural community development. This research goes a step further to argue that consensus is not

necessary within rural community development, based on the practices and experience of the two rural community development case studies under examination. In both instances Programme participants manage to hold a range of very divergent opinions, with different mechanisms developed to overcome these divergences in opinion. In Laggan for example, the co-existence of divergent opinions was facilitated through the existence of a range of different local organisations with different purposes, thereby providing an outlet for all the different views. In Cavan Monaghan in contrast, divergent opinions tended to be masked by the opinions of the more dominant. This recognition of the ability of rural community development to proceed without consensus endorses Bryden *et al. 's* (1997) and McDowell's (1994) argument's that what is important within rural community development is a common cause, broad enough that all participants can unite under, without having to compromise their particular beliefs.

6.4.1.2 Different approaches to rural community development

The Laggan case study provides a relatively rare example of what Quevit (1994) termed the 'spontaneous' approach, locally based and controlled with little direct external funding. The Cavan Monaghan case study in contrast provides an example of what Keane (1990) termed the 'voluntarist approach', externally motivated but recognising the principle of self-help as a mechanism for the delivery of rural community development. Paid professional community development staff are also often used within this type of voluntarist approach ostensibly to promote and support the objective of self-help. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, however, the employment of dedicated community development staff meant that other individuals involved in the overall management of the initiative abdicated a certain degree of responsibility to these staff. In this instance, the community development staff were largely left to their own devices, with little input or direction from those with overall management responsibility. In this case, the development staff worked effectively to provide ongoing supports to groups due to the skills of the particular staff but this might not always be the case. Further work is therefore clearly needed to reflect on the role of professional community development staff within the voluntarist development approach but also within rural community development in general.

6.4.1.3 The extent and nature of participation within rural community development

Rural community development has been defined for the purposes of this research as a development process that addresses the needs of rural communities through empowerment and community participation. This research therefore endorses the arguments of Bryan (1997) and Moseley and Cherrett (1993) that participation is central to rural community development. Whole and equal community participation is clearly the ideal, it is however not always possible for a variety of reasons. In Laggan, for example, while a number of individuals simply did not want to participate in ongoing development activities, this did not prevent the various different groups from progressing with their activities. This supports the work of Curtin and Varley (1991) who argue that it is more important that participation be broadly representative as oppose to requiring full participation.

6.4.2. Methodological Issues

6.4.2.1 Evaluation techniques/methods

In this research, the scale of the subject under investigation clearly had a profound effect on the choice of evaluation techniques used. In Laggan, for example, it was possible to use a whole range of different techniques, including workshops in the local primary school. In the larger scale Cavan Monaghan study, a more limited range of techniques were used, with considerable effort required to ensure the participants selected were broadly representative of the different groups involved. This research would therefore suggest that the smaller the scale of the subject under investigation within participatory approaches (at least) the greater the range of techniques that can be used.

The research also reinforces the view of Gosling (1995) that particular evaluation techniques can suit a range of purposes, not all of which may be evident or expected from the outset. For example, analysis of secondary data sources not only provided the researcher with a broad background to the subject of the evaluation, they also ensured the researcher

was aware of the wider influences in the case studies. In the same way, issue-led focus group discussions served a dual purpose providing not only a mechanism through which participants could gain a better understanding of differences in opinions but also a mechanism through which small but significant changes were made in the operational practices of particular groups. It was also the case that informal group interviews within households which occurred by accident in Laggan (as a result of interviews conducted in the evening in the interviewees home) provided a very useful mechanism through which inter-generational issues were identified and examined in more depth than otherwise might be possible.

The adoption of a participatory evaluation approach required the researcher to relinquish considerable control to the research participants in relation to the selection of evaluation techniques in particular, supporting Fetterman's (1995) view that the constructivist evaluator must allow the participants to shape the evaluation. In Laggan for example, where the researcher had planned and expected to use open community meetings, concerns from participants in relation to the usefulness of these meetings forced the researcher to use other alternative techniques. The situation was broadly similar in Cavan Monaghan.

6.4.2.2 The researcher

Within this research, trust between the researcher and the case study participants took time to establish and in both case studies had to be earned, in different ways from the range of case study participants. In Cavan Monaghan for example, increased levels of trust developed through a series of successful presentations/discussions with Board members and through ongoing progress meetings with staff. Meanwhile greater levels of trust developed between the researcher and the Laggan case study participants as a result of the researcher actively seeking to make contact with all groups without being seen to favour any one particular group. In addition, the physical presence of the researcher in each research area on an ongoing basis and her attendance at a variety of ongoing local activities/events also contributed to this process through the development of a greater familiarity between the researched and the researcher.

6.5. DISCUSSION ON THE OUTCOMES OF PEF IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter has outlined the various different outcomes that arose from the process of PEF implementation. It focused particularly on the identification and consideration of the less tangible outcomes and the occurrence of unforeseen practical actions as a result of these processes. Outcomes identified included the creation of additional opportunities for participation, increased levels of awareness, increased levels of mutual understanding and trust, increased levels of self confidence and increased skills, together with the instigation of a number of practical actions.

This identification of a series of outcomes as a result of the process of implementation of the PEF provides practical evidence to support the argument (in Chapter 4) that the process of implementation of the PEF can produce a series of distinct outcomes that contribute to ongoing development processes. The exact extent and nature of this contribution would however, appear to vary. But in overall terms, the evidence from the two case studies suggests that the outcomes from the process of implementation of the PEF can contribute to the overall aims of the PEF (identified in Chapter 4) and to the main processes of participation, capacity development and partnership development involved in rural community development (identified in Chapter 2).

The processes created a series of opportunities for participation in each case study, the nature and extent of the uptake of which can be seen to have held the key to the creation of the range of other less tangible outcomes. Evidence of the crucial role of participation can be seen on closer examination of the implementation of the PEF. For example, in the processes of data categorisation (steps 10 and 12 of the PEF), where there was little or no participant input, the outcomes of these processes were limited to the actual physical categorisation of the data. This is in sharp contrast to other stages in the implementation of the PEF where there was a significant level of participant participation. The process of

ongoing discussion of evaluation findings (Steps 11, 13 and 14 of the PEF) in contrast produced a series of outcomes including increased levels of participation, awareness, and understanding as well as direct practical action to solve problems.

Opportunities for participation were limited by the conditions for participation established by evaluation participants in both case studies. It was also the case that the scale and nature of the Cavan Monaghan case study limited the opportunities for participation to a select group of evaluation participants. The Laggan case study by contrast, because of its small scale, was able to offer a whole series of opportunities for all local residents of all ages to participate in the implementation process.

The process of implementation raised levels of awareness of a whole broad range of issues and facilitated debate promoting informed decision making and encouraged individuals and groups to consider their roles within the community. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, this awareness was developed further by the identification of practical actions and mechanisms to address some of these issues, while in Laggan the evaluation process provided a mechanism through which the views of some of the wider community could be represented. The transition between awareness and action can largely be attributed to the relevance of the issues identified to those taking the action. Those taking actions could clearly see the need for a particular action and were also in a position to be able to take action. It was also the case that all of these actions related to quite specific issues rather than broad overarching issues and were, as such, relatively simple to implement. It was not surprising therefore to find in the Laggan case study that there were no major changes as a result of the implementation process, since the majority of issues raised would have involved some form of collective action to effect change and would therefore have been exceedingly complex to implement.

The process of implementation of the PEF promoted levels of understanding and trust among and between participants particularly through ongoing discussions held throughout the evaluation process. These discussions promoted dialogue between participants in both

cases and highlighted areas of conflict and understanding. These discussions also highlighted internal differences between participants in both case studies in a non-threatening environment thereby promoting levels of understanding among evaluation participants. This was particularly the case in Laggan where the majority of groups by their nature tended to have a single focus. The process of implementation of the PEF can in this case be seen to have introduced a broader range of issues and concerns thereby promoting enhanced levels of understanding of the differences between groups and of the broader issues facing ongoing community development in Laggan in particular. The particularly local focus of the Laggan case study and the clear dependence of the researcher on the involvement of the local community also enhanced levels of confidence among evaluation participants.

This chapter focused exclusively on the identification of the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF. The next stage in the assessment of the PEF is an examination of the results (the recommendations and findings) of the application of the PEF in the case studies. Chapter 7 examines these results in some depth.

CHAPTER 7. THE RESULTS ARISING FROM THE PEF

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the main findings and recommendations which resulted from the application of the PEF (developed in Chapter 4) in the Cavan Monaghan and Laggan case studies. These findings and recommendations form the products of the PEF. They represent the synthesis of all the various findings of the processes of data collection and analysis (Steps 5-14 of the PEF outlined in Chapters 4 & 5), while the recommendations are a compilation of all the actions identified through ongoing discussion of the evaluation findings throughout the implementation of the PEF in both case studies. The main findings of this chapter and the main findings of Chapter 6 collectively represent the total outcomes (both process and product) of the PEF in each case study.

The full results of the application of the PEF are detailed separately within two reports prepared on completion of the formal evaluation process (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for the full text of these reports) in both case studies. These reports formed an important element in the implementation of the PEF, providing the formal feedback mechanism through which the evaluation findings and recommendations were communicated to evaluation participants. These reports also provide physical and tangible evidence of the results of the application of the PEF in two case studies. The nature of this research effectively precludes the need for the degree of detail contained within these reports in the main text of this thesis. As such, this chapter while it draws extensively from these reports, focuses on the nature rather than the detail of the main findings and recommendations.

This chapter follows a similar format to Chapter 6. It is divided into a number of sections. Section 7.2 and Section 7.3 outline the main findings and recommendations that resulted from the implementation of the PEF in both case studies. Section 7.4 identifies some of the theoretical and methodological issues arising from this chapter for the research. Section 7.5

concludes with a discussion of the nature and extent of the overall results of the application of the PEF in the case studies.

7.2. THE MAIN FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEF IN THE CAVAN MONAGHAN CASE STUDY

7.2.1. The findings of the PEF Report

The findings of the evaluation process were presented on an ongoing basis to evaluation participants in a number of different formats throughout the evaluation process. The findings were also written up in an evaluation report produced at the end of the formal evaluation process. These findings were presented within the final report under three headings:

- The establishment, evolution and development of the Programme
- The outcomes (both tangible and intangible) of the Programme
- The wider impact of the Programme (on local and regional development).

What follows is a review of the main findings within each of these sections.

7.2.1.1. The establishment, evolution and development of the Programme

The evaluation examined the background to the establishment of the LEADER Programme in general and the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme in particular. It also examined the background to the establishment of CMRDCS. It found that CMRDCS was a legal and formal entity, distinct from that of the LEADER Programme. It examined the background to the establishment and initial membership structure of the CMRDCS Board. Within this initial Board structure, the evaluation found that some sectors (agriculture) were particularly well represented while others were poorly represented (education and the community sector).

The evaluation report examined the subsequent development of the Programme, noting the significance of the appointment of a Community Development Officer to promote and

facilitate community development within the region. The evaluation identified a particularly difficult interim period between the completion of LEADER I and the launch of LEADER II. The Programme was sustained during this period by the will, belief and financial support of Board members. (Board members provided CMRDCS with sufficient funding to enable them to staff the office in the period between the completion of LEADER I and the receipt of LEADER II funding.)

The advent of Cavan Monaghan LEADER II in 1995 was recognised as a significant milestone. LEADER II placed greater emphasis on community development. An additional Community Development Officer was appointed with a subsequent increase in the number of community group applications. The composition of the Board also changed with the advent of LEADER II and the appointment of four new community representatives. The evaluation identified a total of nine new Board members (including three females) who were all appointed within the period of a year of the launch of LEADER II. There were no standard induction procedures for these new members and as such the evaluation found it took some new Board members a considerable amount of time to become familiar with the operation of the Programme.

The evaluation found that not all Board members contributed or participated equally in the Programme. Analysis showed that while 80% of the Board attended 80% of the meetings, there were some members who attended very infrequently. The regular attendees were those who were both the most enthusiastic and the most involved[29] in the Programme. The commitment that active board membership required was found to be substantial. It was estimated that an active Board member who was also a member of the assessment subcommittee would spend a minimum of 60 hours per annum attending meetings (excluding the time spent preparing for meetings or travelling to meetings). This represents a significant time commitment for Board members, who work time is generally already more than fully allocated.

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[29]An individual who attends at least one subcommittee meeting.

The evaluation examined the operation of the Board. Amongst some of the most significant findings of this analysis was the amount of time spent on project assessment. It was estimated that 70% of each Board meeting was spent assessing projects, already assessed at sub-committee level[30], thereby leaving little time for other business. Policy development and discussion tended to be reactive. This focus on project assessment was reflected in Board members' attitudes, the majority of whom regarded the Programme primarily as a mechanism for obtaining funding rather than a organisation that promoted and supported development. The majority of Board members poorly understood the development work undertaken by staff. Less that half of the Board members interviewed were clear about what the process of rural community development involved. The evaluation also found that while Board members believed CMRDCS had a role to play in local development, they were unable to envisage its future without LEADER, or some other form of external funding

7.2.1.2. The outcomes of the Programme

The outcomes of the Programme were examined under two headings, tangible and intangible.

The tangible outcomes of the Programme

The tangible outcomes of the Programme included the number of project applications received the types of project promoters assisted and the nature of the successfully funded projects. The evaluation found that 232 projects were funded under the Cavan Monaghan LEADER I Programme (which represented 56% of all applications received) while Cavan Monaghan LEADER II had approved funding for 102 Projects (which represented 60% of all applications received). The changes in the priorities of the two Cavan Monaghan

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[30] The Board must sanction all Assessment committee recommendations, in reality however it is very rare that the Board would overturn a recommendation for the subcommittee. The evaluation followed 25 project applications from the Assessment Committee to the relevant Board meeting where all 25 of the subcommittee recommendations were accepted.

LEADER Programmes meant it was not possible to make a meaningful comparison between them. The evaluation therefore focused on the outcomes of the LEADER II Programme. See Figure 7.1 for a breakdown of the projects approved under LEADER II (to 30/9/96).

Figure 7.1. Projects approved under LEADER II (May 1995 to 30th September 1996)

Project Category	No. of Applications	No. of community Applications	Min. Grant	Max. Grant	Average Grant
1. Technical Assistance	42	42	£ 487	£16,000	£1,338
2. Training	9	9	£1,000	£9,280	£4,332
3. Small Medium Enterprises	13	0	£ 800	£41,300	£14,503
4. Tourism					
Accommodation	11	0	£ 741	£12,950	£6,944
Other Tourism	18	12	£ 200	£18,500	£7,563
5. Agriculture	4	0	£2,960	£20,000	£6,128.
6. Environment	5	4	£1,000	£7,000	£6,785

The distribution of projects and the average grant rate varied considerably (from £14,503 to £1,338) across the different project categories. There was also found to be a substantial change (compared with LEADER I) in the proportion of different types of projects received under Cavan Monaghan LEADER II, together with a large increase in the number of community group applications and applications from female promoters. Not all of these projects are community development projects (i.e. they are not all for collective purposes). The majority of community development projects fall under the categories of technical assistance (40 projects), training (9 projects) other tourism (18 projects) and environment (5 projects), which is a total of 72 community development projects approved under LEADER II (up until 30th September 1996).

The evaluation identified a fall in the overall number of project applications received under LEADER II in comparison with a similar period under LEADER I. The reasons identified for this decline was identified as a change in the priorities and eligibility criteria for the

Programme and the advent of a number of other development agencies funding broadly similar types of development initiatives. The evaluation found also that the Programme was not pro-active in following up potential project promoters[31].

The intangible outcomes of the Programme

The intangible outcomes of the Programme were identified as increased levels of participation, increased capacity and skill levels and increased levels of partnership/collaboration between Programme participants. In general terms, the evaluation identified the emphasis on the receipt and successful funding of projects within the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme as an important factor which drew attention away from the importance and relevance of these outcomes.

The majority of the intangible outcomes were found to have arisen from a variety of processes including the development of particular project ideas, the provision of formal training and the provision of support and advice by Programme staff. The intangible outcomes of the Programme were also seen to relate to all Programme participants including Board members, staff, project promoters and local community groups.
The remainder of this section details the main outcomes of the Programme identified as follows:

- The provision of training opportunities;
- The networking opportunities facilitated by the Programme;
- The support provided for Project Promoters;
- The support provided for community groups;
- The support provided for CMRDCS Board members and staff.

[31] Potential project promoters were identified as those people who had attended any of the LEADER public meetings or who had contacted the programme for further information.

The provision of training opportunities

The Cavan Monaghan LEADER I Programme provided a range of different training opportunities including community development leadership training, business start up courses and training in computer technology. There was a substantial fall (30/7/96) in the number of training applications received under Cavan Monaghan LEADER II. This fall reflected a general fall in the total number of project applications received. The majority of training applications received under LEADER II were initiated internally. This increase in the number of internal applications was found to reflect an increased emphasis on the developmental and capacity building role of the Programme. The evaluation identified the development of a jointly run 'facilitators course' to train individuals to act as local facilitators as a particularly exciting training initiative in terms of its nature and expected outcomes. The evaluation also found that the policy of providing courses locally offered a greater number of people an opportunity to attend. The evaluation also examined the issue of quality control within the provision of training and found that little attention was devoted to this issue apart from a brief evaluation form completed at the end of courses.

The networking opportunities facilitated by the Programme.

The establishment of the CMRDSC was found to have provided a rare opportunity for cross county co-operation. Board members in particular benefited from contacts made through Board membership. The Programme was also responsible for the establishment of the Cavan Community Network and the Monaghan Community Network. These two groups act as umbrella organisations representing the different community groups in each county. Some members of the Board and staff were also involved in the Irish LEADER Network, which in turn encourages networking between different LEADER groups.

The support provided for project promoters

The evaluation found that the level and nature of staff support for project promoters varied substantially. A small community group application for £1,000, for example to equip a community office, could take considerably longer to develop and absorb substantially more resources in its preparation, than a larger application from an individual promoter. The

nature of the majority of community group applications was such, however, that it generally involved a larger number of people, all of whom could benefit from this type of Programme support. The benefits of participation identified by community groups included, 'getting to know one another better'; 'learning how to fill in an application' and 'more confident that if we had to do it again we could' (Project Promoters Survey, July 1996). The evaluation also found that development support was often required over a substantial time period in order to generate a project.

Programme staff were found to spend a considerable amount of time providing development support (meeting potential project promoters, following up enquiries, looking for additional information, providing training opportunities, etc. etc.) with no system for recording either the nature or the effectiveness of this support. (As part of the evaluation process the Community Development Officers kept a detailed daily dairy of their activities over a period of a fortnight.)

The support provided for community groups

The evaluation report identified a total of 56 established community groups in the two counties, with a further 4 communities meeting to consider the establishment of a group. The sheer number and dispersed nature of these groups make it difficult for the Programme to provide support to all groups equally. The amount of support a particular group received was found to be at the discretion of Programme staff (who tended to act in response to requests from groups). Groups were broadly classified according to the level of training they had received. One of the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF was indeed the development of a system to classify these groups. The subsequent adoption of this system enabled the evaluation to chart and to examine the progress of different groups. This system also demonstrated the role of ongoing Programme support (staff had worked closely on an ongoing basis with groups) in the development of particular groups.

The supports provided for CMRDCS Board members and staff

More established board members were found to have had difficulties adjusting to the new priorities of the LEADER II Programme, with little in the way of support provided to help them in this adjustment process. A number of the training opportunities provided for Board members had been cancelled for a variety of reasons and none of them had been re-scheduled. The evaluation also found that support for staff was provided in response to staff requests through the Programme manager to the Board with no overall strategic training approach.

7.2.1.3. The wider impact of the Programme

The priorities and proactive delivery mechanisms (e.g. the appointment of community development officers, the establishment of regular county-wide development clinics, etc). were found to represent a significant departure from other regional development initiatives. The Programme was seen to have provided a new locally based model for rural community development. In addition to this, the cross county and local nature of the Co-op which offered the local community an opportunity to participate in the decision making processes represented a departure from conventional delivery approaches. The appointment of two community development officers to work with individual community groups was recognised as an important strategy, the impact of which could be clearly felt within local communities and within other development agencies some of whom were seen to have adopted a similar approach. The Monaghan Partnership for example, established in 1996 adopted this type of locally based approach.

7.2.2. The Recommendations of the Evaluation

The evaluation report contained a series of 53 recommendations, none of which were prioritised. These were identified through the implementation of the 15 stage PEF detailed in Figure 4.6. The purpose of these recommendations was to provide practical mechanisms by which some of the issues raised by the evaluation could be addressed (See Appendix 2. for full details). These recommendations were presented under similar headings to the

evaluation findings. See Figure 7.2 for a breakdown of the different types of recommendations.

Figure 7.2. A breakdown of the evaluation report's recommendations

Recommendation Type	Sub-total	Total
I. The Development of the Programme		**19**
Related to the Board	15	
Related to the Sub-committees	3	
Related to the Sub-groups	1	
II. The Outcomes of the Programme		**29**
Related to the tangible outcomes	11	
Related to the intangible outcomes	18	
III. The Wider Impact of the Programme		**5**
	Total	**53**

7.2.2.1. Recommendations for the ongoing development of the Programmes

Fifteen recommendations related to the size and composition of the Board and the location and format of their meetings. These recommendations included

- The introduction of a standard induction system for new board members.
- The positions of chairperson, treasurer, etc. are rotated among board members on a regular basis.
- The Board become more involved in the work of the community development officers.
- The Board adopting a more proactive approach to policy development.
- The introduction and adoption of a self-evaluation system, to encourage more open, ongoing and broad ranging debates at Board level.
- The raising of the issue of staff development at the Administration and Rules Subcommittee.
- The development of the role of the both the Policy and the Assessment subcommittees..
- The development by the Assessment subcommittee of more rigorous assessment criteria for community group project applications.
- The establishment of a new Community Development sub-group.

7.2.2.2. The recommendations relating to the outcomes of the Programme

The evaluation made 11 recommendations related to the tangible outcomes of the Programme. These included recommendations to undertake more comprehensive and ongoing categorisation of projects. The evaluation also recommended the Programme undertake active promotion of some project categories and some promoter types, where the number of applications received were low, or where the number of a applications from a particular promoter type were low. The report also suggested that the Programme establish a system to follow up general enquiries, given that each enquirer was a potential project promoter.

The evaluation highlighted the importance of the development process and made 18 recommendations in relation to the identification and valuation of the intangible outcomes of these processes. The evaluation recommended and subsequently outlined a series of systems to identify the different stages in the development process, recommending that the Programme adopt and use these or other similar systems to undertake ongoing monitoring of the various development processes.

7.2.2.3. The recommendations relating to the wider impact of the Programme

The evaluation highlighted the success of the cross county, locally based development approach and recommended that this approach be adopted by other initiatives. The evaluation also recommended that innovative ways continue to be sought to deliver the Programme in a proactive way. It was also recommended that the Programme continue to develop links with other development initiatives, with the subsequent recommendation for the development of a joint guide to all the various regional development agencies and their services.

7.3. THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEF IN THE LAGGAN CASE STUDY

7.3.1. The Findings of the PEF Report

The findings of the evaluation process were presented in a number of formats. The report was produced at the end of the formal evaluation process. (See Appendix 3). The evaluation findings were presented under two main heading with a number of sub-headings within the report.

1. A review of the various community groups operating in Laggan

- An overview of the community development groups
- A review of the relationships between the various community groups

2. Key local development issues and concerns including:

- Who it is that constitutes the community in Laggan?
- The nature of local participation: a substantial commitment for some;
- The role of the shop;
- The need for better information provision;
- The need for a community mandate;
- The growth in local capacity and confidence;
- The need for more local co-ordination;
- The existence of local research and media fatigue.

What follows is a review of the main findings within each of these sections.

7.3.1.1. A review of the various groups operating in Laggan

The review of the community groups operating in Laggan was divided into two parts. The first part identified each group, their composition and their structures, while the second part examined the relationships between the groups.

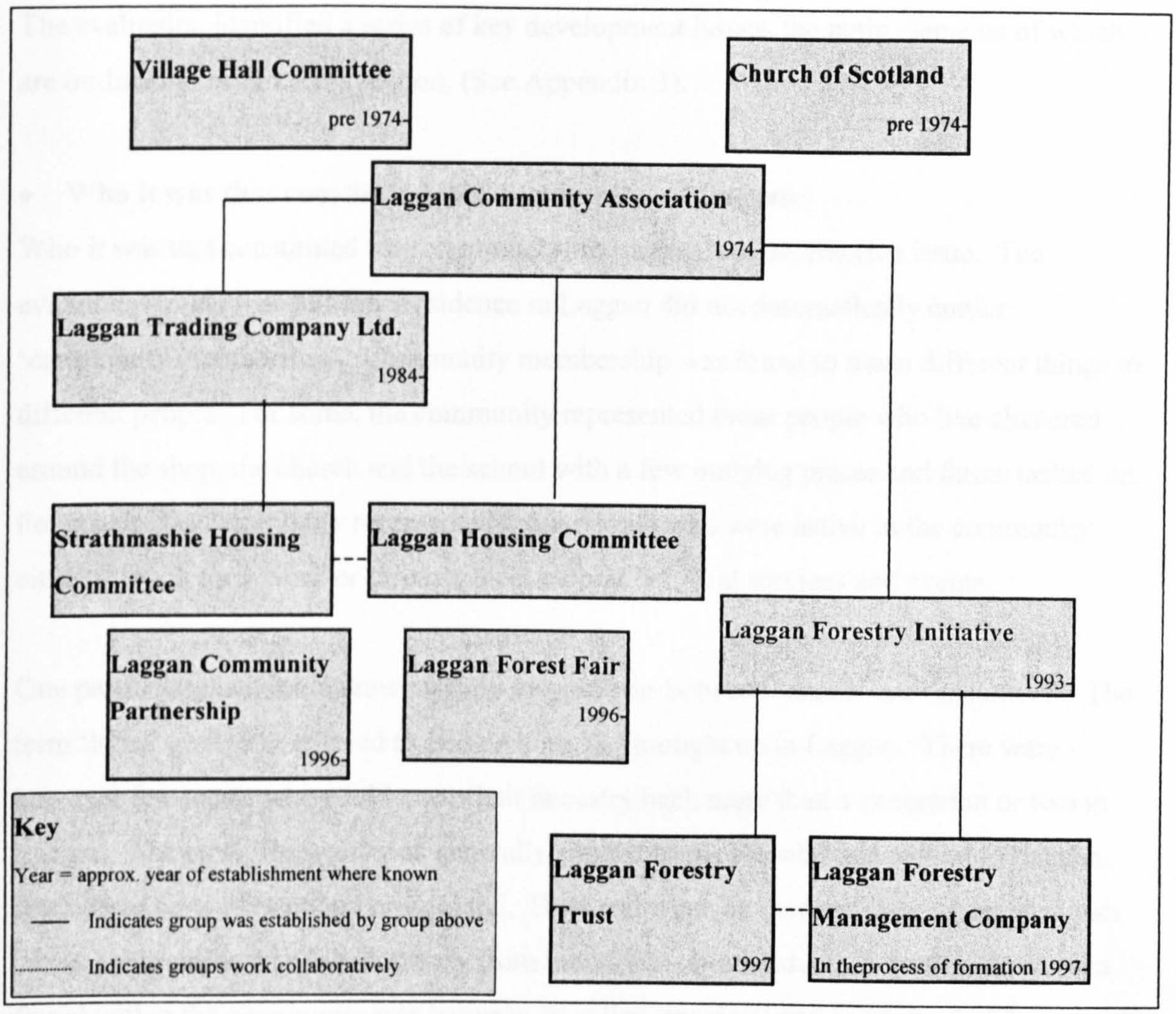
- **The overview of the community development groups**

The evaluation found 10 different community groups active in Laggan, a significant number of which had been formed, in the previous 5-10 years. It detailed the background to the established of each group and their structures, objectives and methods of operation and the activities with which they were involved in some detail (for full details see Appendix 3.). Groups examined in this way included the Laggan Village Hall Committee, Laggan Community Association (LCA), Laggan Trading Company Ltd, Strathmashie Housing Committee/ Laggan Housing Committee, Laggan Forestry Committee/ Laggan Forestry Initiative (LFI), Laggan Forest Management Company Ltd (LFM) and Laggan Forest Trust (LFT), Laggan Community Partnership (LCP), Laggan Forest Fair (LFF), The Church of Scotland Laggan and some other smaller local groups.

- **The relationships between the different groups**

The second part of this section outlines the relationships between some of the main community groups in Laggan. See Figure 7.3 for an overview of these findings. (Figure 7.3 is broadly similar to Figure 5.5 a map of the potential evaluation participants in Laggan. Figure 7.3 focuses specifically on the nature of the relationship between groups in Laggan.

Figure 7.3. The relationships between the main community groups in Laggan



LCA played a key role in the establishment of a number of groups, the majority of which now function as independent groups. LCP and LFF in contrast were established independently without reference to other existing groups within the last 3-4 years. The majority of groups function independently of one another, although some groups (LCP, LFI, LFT) did invite representatives from other groups to sit on their committees. In general terms, however, there was found to be little feedback or ongoing communication between groups. It was not surprising, therefore, that the evaluation found some overlap between the activities of groups, particularly the activities of LCP and LCA.

7.3.1.2. Key local development issues and concerns in Laggan

The evaluation identified a series of key development issues, the main elements of which are outlined in brief in this section, (See Appendix 3).

- **Who it was that constituted 'the community' of Laggan**

Who it was that constituted 'the community' in Laggan was an emotive issue. The evaluation found that full time residence in Laggan did not automatically confer 'community membership'. Community membership was found to mean different things to different people. For some, the community represented those people who live clustered around the shop, the church and the school with a few outlying places and farms tacked on. For others, the community represented those people who were active in the community either through their work or through their support for local services and events.

One particular distinction drawn within Laggan was between 'locals' and 'incomers'. The term 'local' generally referred to people born and brought up in Laggan. There were however few locals who could trace their ancestry back more than a generation or two in Laggan. The term 'incomer' was generally applied to people who had moved to Laggan from other parts of Scotland or England. How and when an incomer was accepted as part of the community, was found to vary from individual to individual. A further distinction found within the community was between so called 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The 'insiders' were those people who were involved in the community, while the 'outsiders' were those people who were not.

- **The nature of local participation - a substantial commitment for some**

The evaluation found that 30% of the adult population were actively involved in local committees, with some individuals involved in several committees. One particular individual was involved in four committees, while five others were involved in three. The majority of committee members were aged between 45 and 60. There were also quite a number of over 60's involved. There was, however, found to be a notable absence of the younger generation (aged 21-45) involved. This was indeed identified as an issue, which

needs to be addressed by many community groups, if existing groups were to continue to thrive in the future.

Membership of some groups, particularly the Forestry Initiative was, in addition, found to require significantly more time than other committees. In the case of LFI, members also attended day meetings and events, thereby giving not only of their time, but forgoing their income over that period. Analysis of the meetings attended by LFI members over the period February 1996 to April 1997 found that a total of 582 hours (which is the equivalent of 16 working weeks) was spent attending meetings. This total does not include the time involved preparing funding applications. (This was estimated to have taken a minimum of 15 days).

It is also the case that Laggan had attracted considerable press and media attention, with a growing number of individuals and groups keen to visit Laggan and learn about what is happening. All these visits were found to place a considerable stain on local resources in terms of organisation and meeting with these groups.

Membership of local committees was only one indicator of local commitment. Support for local services (the surgery, shop, school and social events) was another. There was found to be a core group of individuals who supported all these local services, but who preferred to remain uninvolved on local committees. There was also a number of local committee members who did not support many of the local services, preferring to travel elsewhere. There was, in addition, found to be a number of individuals who live in Laggan, but who did not support any of the services nor involve themselves in local activities. In a small village, these things do not go unnoticed and these uninvolved individuals were generally known and frequently dismissed by the other more involved Laggan residents.

- **The role of the shop**

The shop was found to play an important role within local community life. It provided both an important practical and a social function. It provided a meeting place and a focal point

through which local news was exchanged. The limited opening hours of the shop effectively prohibited the use of the shop by those working away from Laggan (except on Saturdays and briefly on Sundays). The shop could, however, be an intimidating place for those individuals new to the area or those who do not use it regularly.

- **The need for better information provision**

There were two community notice boards in Laggan, neither of which were updated regularly. The evaluation found the majority of community information tended to be passed by word of mouth, with meetings arranged often at short notice, so only those who were directly involved knew what was happening. Neither did community groups post the minutes of meetings.

- **The need for a community mandate**

The evaluation found that the community initiatives which were well regarded in Laggan were those which benefited the whole community, e.g. the provision of better television reception, the re-building of the village hall and the community take-over of the shop. Increasingly the evaluation found that the benefits of new community initiatives were seen to accrue differentially, with certain community members seen to benefit more than others. This perception was found to be fairly widespread within the community in Laggan and was something that the evaluation argued needed to be addressed. Another issue arising from this was the co-option of individuals with particular skills on to various local committees. The wider community often did not know these individuals and as such it seems to be important that all future co-options are ratified and approved by them at the various local groups' AGMs.

- **The growth in local capacity and confidence**

Local confidence was found by the evaluation to have grown over the years with the successful establishment and ongoing management of various community initiatives. The local community was also able to acknowledge the projects that have not been successful (e.g. Kinlochlaggan Filling Station). The projects undertaken by the community were found

to have become more and more ambitious. The establishment of LFI was identified as the most ambitious project to date. Not all members of the community were, however, as confident of the success of this initiative as they had been of other projects.

- **The need for more local co-ordination and partnership**

The evaluation found that the majority of local group committees work independently of one another, with projects undertaken by specific groups with no forum for the discussion of common issues or co-ordination of dates for local events. The evaluation clearly identified the need for more co-ordination between groups. The evaluation also found that the group-specific, project-specific approach meant that different groups had made small individual applications for funding to the same agencies. As funding agencies increasingly move from project to Programme funding the evaluation identified the potential for development of larger joint applications from a number of local groups.

- **The existence of research and media fatigue**

The evaluation found over the years that Laggan had played host to a whole variety of visits from different groups keen to learn about what was happening. For the most part Laggan residents considered there to be little benefit from these visits, visitors had tended to come and go with little or no feedback. LFI in particular had attracted a considerable amount of media attention. This attention was not always found to be welcome locally, particularly amongst those who were sceptical about the whole notion of community forestry. As such the whole issue of ongoing media coverage of events in Laggan and the prospect of an increasing number of groups visits to Laggan was found to be an emotive local issue which needs to be addressed in a sensitive way.

7.3.2. The Recommendations of the Evaluation

This section outlines the key recommendations of relevance to the majority of community groups in Laggan. These recommendations were identified as a result of the implementation of the 15 stage PEF outlined in Figure 4.6. A number of group specific recommendations were also identified as a result of this process. These were generally very

detailed and specific to the operation of particular groups and as such for reasons of brevity, clarity and relevance were presented separately to the appropriate community group. These general recommendations are closely related to the key findings of the evaluation outlined in the previous section 7.3.1. These recommendations were grouped under a number of headings and are detailed as follows:

- **Action to meet the need for more information**
- **The maximisation of local involvement**
- **The maximisation of local effort**
- **Consolidation and development of local confidence**
- **The development of a more strategic approach to development**

- **Action to meet the need for more information**

The evaluation highlighted the need for the provision of ongoing information by the various community groups in order to ensure that group activities are open to the wider community. The evaluation recommended that this information be presented in a variety of forms in order to ensure maximum exposure. The evaluation also recommended the preparation and regular updating of a list of community group members' names and contact numbers to be kept in the community office. Other recommendations included more effective use of the community notice board, better use of the Splash (the community newsletter), the instigation of a community diary outlining different groups planned activities, applications in preparation etc., the use of more effective open meetings, the placement of a community notice board within the shop and an increased use of the community office as a repository for local information.

- **The maximisation of local involvement**

The evaluation identified a number of recommendations in relation to the maximisation of local involvement as follows:

1. Local community groups examine their composition, structure and the commitments of their existing members, identifying and seeking additional committee members from amongst the younger uninvolved local population.

2. Local community groups seek community wide approval for the co-option of new members onto committees.
3. Individual local community groups members are encouraged to maintain membership of a limited number of community groups only, thereby forcing groups to seek new members.
4. Community group activities should serve a number of purposes, including reinforcing local identity and as such the evaluation recommended that local groups do not overlook the need for and importance of having fun/'fun raising'.

- **The maximisation of local effort**

The evaluation recommended that community groups consider the possibility of working together in a more collaborative way, particularly in relation to the preparation of funding applications. It also suggested that groups consider charging for the services that they provide to the media and other visitors to Laggan particularly where this absorbs a considerable amount of voluntary effort and time with little or no gain for Laggan.

- **Consolidation and development of local confidence**

The evaluation proposed that all local groups meet on a regular basis to discuss the future of community development in Laggan and the long-term sustainability of each group. The evaluation recommended that until this question has been addressed groups focus their skills and expertise on the completion and maintenance of existing projects. The evaluation also suggested that the groups produce an inventory of skills within the community. It also recommended that less experienced group members be encouraged to work with experienced members in order to learn and develop new skills.

- **The development of a more strategic approach to development**

Joint meetings of all groups was another recommendation, the purpose of which was to identify overlaps between different groups, with consideration given to the need to rationalise the number of groups in existence, with the meeting chaired by an independent chairperson. The evaluation also proposed that groups investigate the potential for the development of joint working arrangements.

The evaluation also suggested that consideration be given to the development of an internal community partnership, an 'umbrella type organisation', to represent all groups and which is answerable to all the groups. The evaluation proposed that this umbrella group be formed from an existing organisation and thereafter that it might seek charitable status, which other groups could then use. It also advocated the organisation of regular collective meetings of representatives of the various different community groups, suggesting these meetings would provide a forum for the co-ordination of local activities.

Other recommendations related to the further development of the community office as a community resource. The evaluation also suggested that the roles of the two part time community staff should be re-considered. The evaluation identified the appointment of the new LEADER II community contact person as an opportunity which groups could develop. Finally, the evaluation identified the LEADER II Action Plan for Laggan as a useful document to assist in the prioritisation of the activities of different community groups in the future.

7.4. SOME THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THIS CHAPTER

7.4.1 Theoretical Issues

7.4.1.1 Key elements of rural community development

This research firmly endorses the work of McDowell (1994) who identified the reward for effort principle (i.e. that people generally do not participate without a reason) as critical to the success of rural community development. This research endorses the principle in two ways. Firstly, the research identifies a whole series of different motivations for participation among the two sets of case study participants. Some individuals were motivated by the desire to become involved in local decision making or to gain local recognition, while other individuals were motivated by a desire to provide/to improve local services in order to ensure the area was an attractive place to live for the younger generation. Secondly, the research makes a clear connection between the extent and nature of particular individual's participation and the ability of that individual to satisfy their reasons for participation, highlighting the case that it is unlikely that a particular individual will remain committed to an initiative if it does not satisfy at least some of their reasons for involvement. This research also draws attention to the fact that individuals' reasons for participation can change over time. For example, in Laggan a number of individuals who were originally actively involved in local youth activities (motivated by the needs of their children) became gradually less involved as their reasons for participation diminished.

Vazquez-Barqyero (1992), Kulkarni and Rajan (1991) and others argue that successful rural community development generally involves activities and initiatives that benefit the community or particular groups within the community in a collective way. This research supports this view. The Laggan case study for example illustrates that in relation to the operation of the Forestry Management Company there was a local perception that those most likely to benefit were the Company directors. This situation was ultimately resolved through the establishment of the Forestry Trust. The Trust was charged with representing the interests of the wider Laggan community with specific responsibility for overseeing the

operation of the Company. This suggests as Vazquez-Barqyero (1992) argues that the focus of rural community development initiatives needs to be collective action.

7.4.1.1 Different approaches to rural community development

This research supports McDowell (1994) view that rural community development requires and frequently depends on the special initiative leadership and action of some individuals who prove the outside experts wrong. The establishment of Cavan Monaghan Rural Development Co-operative Society Ltd for example, can be seen to be the result of the activities of four or five individuals involved in the large local dairy co-operatives in counties Cavan and Monaghan. These individuals in turn convinced their employers to invest significant funding in the development of a Business Plan for the Co-op that in turn convinced other interested parties to become involved. In the same way community activities in Laggan developed from the activities of four or five people who were convinced of the importance of the provision of a television signal (despite the technical and resource issues associated with this provision in such a mountainous area) for the survival of the community in Laggan. Armed with this belief they fought against the odds to locate and provide this signal for their community. The success of this initiative in particular, and the fact that the local community still continue to provide their own signal in turn served/serves to provide ongoing motivation others. What is also clear from this research is that as the potential of the particular initiative becomes more apparent, it often becomes easier to attract other participants.

7.4.1.2 The extent and nature of participation within participatory evaluation

This research demonstrates that participation can take a number of forms and operate at a number of levels supporting the work of Arnstein (1969) and Midgley *et al.* (1986). This research also illustrated the importance of the quality and the nature of participation involved in rural community development thereby re-inforcing the views of Varley (1988) and Wright (1990). Arnstein (1969) in her work recognises a whole series of levels of participation that are not simply about membership of local groups and organisations. This research re-inforces this work in two ways; firstly, through its recognition of participation as a very broad concept that involves consideration of the use of local services, (like the school, the shop or the surgery) and attendance at local events and gatherings, (like the Luncheon Club or the local cheilidh in Laggan). Secondly, this research identifies that membership of a particular group is not de-facto participation, given that an individual can be a member without being a participant. In the Cavan Monaghan case study for example, there were a few Board Members on the original Board who attended meetings only infrequently and who did not make much contribution to the meetings they did attend. (These individuals were encouraged to resign through the introduction of the 'three meeting rule' where if a board member misses more than three consecutive meetings without sufficient explanation, they were considered to have resigned.)

7.4.2. Methodological Issues

7.4.2.1 The evaluation of rural community development and rural community development processes

This research demonstrates the nature and extent of the outcomes (in terms of increased levels of participation, awareness, confidence and mutual understanding) that arise from rural community development processes. These outcomes by their nature tend to be intangible and are therefore difficult to measure quantitatively supporting Harmon and Mayer's (1986) definition of social problems and social outcomes as inherently 'wicked', i.e. difficult to define, identify and in this particular case, measure. A series of different mechanisms therefore had to be used within this research to identify the nature and extent of these outcomes. One of the most challenging tasks of this research was the identification

of a mechanism to assess the outcomes of the supports provided by the Cavan Monaghan case study to local community groups (of which there were at least 50). In the event no easy to implement mechanism was found and the researcher therefore had to develop a classification system based on the different stages of development of groups to chart the progress and outcomes of the different groups. This use of this classification system enabled the researcher to identify the extent and nature of the outcomes of a large number of groups. The system was also subsequently used by the Development Team in Cavan Monaghan to chart the progress of groups and to identify key target groups and areas that might need particular supports and can therefore be seen to have significant potential for wider application.

The analysis of the background context of a particular rural community development initiative is difficult as Stern (1987) suggests because of the time-consuming, multi-dimensional nature and complexity of factors involved. This research highlights the importance of the analysis of the background and context of a particular initiative to the development of a better and broader understanding of a particular initiative in a wider context. For example, the awareness of the background and history behind ongoing local developments in Laggan enabled the researcher to make the connection between the establishment of the substantial number of community groups in Laggan and the existence of some very strong local personalities who, despite their efforts, simply could not work together. The development of this type of in-depth understanding of a particular initiative is difficult and can take a significant time, dependent as it is on the development of a substantial level of trust between the researched and the researcher. This research would suggest that this understanding of the background of a particular initiative is particularly important within smaller scale initiatives where there is often a shared history, that is not always obvious from the outset. For example, in Cavan Monaghan case study most information is available on file or in the minutes of meetings while in Laggan records were kept on a more ad hoc basis, so that the quantity and quality of information available there varied substantially. The only way to gain an in depth understanding of the background to

developments in the evaluation of small scale spontaneous development initiative is therefore through conversation.

The process of rural community development clearly involves a whole range of different groups both directly and indirectly. As such, this research to be inclusive sought to examine the outcomes of the process of rural community development from the range of perspectives involved, both directly and directly. In the Cavan Monaghan case study this involved the examination of the outcomes for Board Members, Staff, Subcommittee Members, Successful Project Promoters, Unsuccessful Project Promoters, Potential Project Promoters and Other Local Development Agencies. Meanwhile in Laggan this involved examination of the outcomes for the members of the local committees; those not involved in local community development type activities; local school children; and representatives involved in the ongoing developments, such as, representatives of Forest Enterprise or the local Council. This research clearly demonstrates that while an examination of the outcomes of rural community development from the perspective of the different groups involved is clearly time consuming it is important if the full extent and nature of the outcomes arising from a particular development process are to be fully acknowledged.

7.4.2.3 The role of the researcher

Any research or evaluation by its nature involves a certain amount of probing by the researcher or evaluator in order to uncover issues and events that might otherwise be overlooked. The danger with this type of probing is that it may raise issues that have lain dormant for some time. This research would suggest that this is perhaps a more significant concern in smaller scale more community based rural community development initiatives, where particular issues can become quite personalised and therefore divisive. For example, in Laggan the researcher quickly became aware of the existence of a considerable level of local sensitivity among a number of local residents around a number of issues, which was not the case in the Cavan Monaghan case study. This research would therefore suggest that any researcher approaching the evaluation of a small scale rural community development

initiative in particular be cognisant of the need to be aware of the sensitivity of particular issues particularly as local communities are often not unified.

7.5. A DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE PEF IN THE TWO CASE STUDIES

This chapter has outlined the main findings and recommendations that resulted from the implementation of the PEF in the Cavan Monaghan and the Laggan case study. The key findings of the Cavan Monaghan PEF related to the operation of CMRDCS and in particular to different Board members' levels of participation. The evaluation identified a drop in the overall number of project applications received and a change in the proportions of different types of applications received. It also identified the need for more ongoing monitoring particularly in relation to the nature and effectiveness of the community development supports provided by the Programme. The key recommendations related to desired changes in the operation of the Board and the adoption of a series of systems to monitor the nature and effectiveness of supports provided by the Programme. These systems were also to be used to assist in future planning within the Programme.

The Laggan PEF focused on a review of the operation of the various different community groups and identified the lack of co-ordination between groups. The evaluation also identified the need for wider community participation in the various groups and for better communication by groups with the wider community. The key recommendations related to the development of a regular forum for cross community meetings and the establishment of an 'umbrella type organisation' to co-ordinate the activities of the various groups.

The results of the implementation of the PEF in Cavan Monaghan were clearly quite tightly structured around three key issues, the structures, the outcomes (both tangible and intangible) and wider impacts, reflecting the concerns of CMRDCS Board members and staff. The results of the Laggan case study were more broadly focused, reflecting the different concerns held by the range of evaluation participants. There was a clear focus

within both sets of results, on the structures of the organisations and in particular on the nature of participation within those organisations, and between those organisations and other Programme participants.

The purpose of the identification of these findings and recommendations has been to provide evaluation participants with a tangible practical agenda for debate and action. Chapter 8 examines what, if anything has happened as a result of these findings and recommendations. It also examines what, if any, outcomes arose from the process of implementation of the PEF. The overall purpose of Chapter 8 is to determine the extent and nature of the outcomes which can be seen to have affected each case study (some six[32] months after completion of the formal evaluation process in the Cavan Monaghan case study and three months after the completion of the formal evaluation process in Laggan).

[32] The differences in the timing of the review is a reflection of the external constraints (particularly time and funding constraints) imposed on this research.

CHAPTER 8. A REVIEW OF THE EFFECT OF THE PEF

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and examine the longer-term effects of the PEF within each case study. This chapter is a key element in the examination of the potential of participatory evaluation for rural community development. It builds on and develops from Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, which detail the immediate outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF and the results of the implementation respectively. The aim of this chapter is to review the overall effect of the PEF within the case studies.

The findings of this review were initially written up in the form of short reports[33]. These reports were an important feedback mechanism for evaluation participants and as such contain a considerable amount of detail, much of which is relevant to this review of the effects of PEF (See Appendix 5 and 6 for the full text of these reports).

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 8.2 outlines how the review was implemented in each location. Section 8.3 details the findings of the review, while section 8.4 concludes with a discussion of the overall effect of the PEF.

8.2. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF THE PEF

In ideal circumstances, given sufficient time and finances, the implementation of a participative review[34] process would have ensured continuity of approach. The time-consuming nature of a participatory review process, together with the strict time limitations

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[33] These reports were sent to case study participants approximately 4-6 weeks after completion of the formal review process.

[34] Evaluation reviews are relatively rare and the researcher has yet to identify a participatory review.

imposed on this research effectively meant it was not possible to undertake a participatory review.

8.2.1. The Review Strategies

The review of the PEF was undertaken using a combination of four key strategies as follows:

1. An examination of the extent of implementation of the evaluation recommendations
2. An examination of the extent and nature of any PEF-induced changes in the organisations responsible for the delivery of community development and an investigation of the role of the PEF in this process.
3. An analysis of changes in committee members' awareness of development issues
4. An identification of the other factors which may have influenced the case study

1. The extent to which the reports' recommendations had been implemented

Each recommendation was categorised under one of the following headings:

- implemented, (following completion of the formal evaluation process)
- implemented during the evaluation process,
- partially implemented,
- under consideration
- not implemented.

The information necessary to undertake this classification was collected using a variety of techniques including: observation of ongoing practices; reviews of minutes of meetings and other secondary data; re-interviews with key actors; informal and ongoing discussions with evaluation participants.

2. *An examination of the extent and nature of any changes in the organisations responsible for the delivery of community development and an investigation of the role of the PEF in this process.*

The methods and mechanisms of operation of the organisations responsible for the delivery of community development were identified in each case study as part of the original evaluation 'focus'. These methods and mechanisms were re-examined as part of the review process in order to determine whether and to what extent a) group practices had changed, b) what factors that had influenced these changes, c) what role if any, the implementation of the PEF had played in these changes and d) what role the results of the PEF had played in these changes.

3. *An analysis of changes in key individuals' awareness of community development issues.*

A number of key individuals who were interviewed as part of the evaluation process were re-interviewed as part of the review process. These re-interviews followed a similar format to the original interviews, which enabled the two interviews to be compared in order to identify any changes in individuals' awareness levels. These interviewees were also asked to describe the various events which had occurred and influenced the Programme in the intervening period between the evaluation and the review in order to identify other factors which may have influenced their change in awareness levels and attitudes.

4. *An identification of other factors which may have influenced the case study*

The identification of other external factors that may have influenced the programme was undertaken through an ongoing review of national, regional and local newspapers and through meetings and discussions with those involved in the case studies.

What follows is an outline of how the review was conducted in each case study. (For full details see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6).

8.2.2. The Implementation of Cavan Monaghan Review

The review took place over a two-week period approximately five months after the submission of the final report (17/12/1996) and twelve months after the initial arrival of the researcher to begin the implementation of the PEF.

8.2.2.1. The mechanisms used to examine the extent of implementation of the evaluation recommendations comprised:

- Individual and group discussion with various staff members;
- Analysis of minutes of board, subcommittee, sub group meetings respectively;
- Observation and comparison of current operational practices[35];
- A series of re-interviews with staff and board members.

8.2.2.2. The mechanisms used to examine changes in the operation of CMRDSC comprised:

The identification of a series of indicators of change as follows:

- Changes in the priority given to the development of human capacity & confidence;
- Changes in the priority given to innovation and enterprise;
- Changes in the priority given to the development of local partnerships;
- Changes in the level and nature of participation within the programme;
- Changes in development planning within the programme.

These indicators were identified with reference to identification in Chapter 2 of what it is that constitutes the key processes involved in rural community development. These indicators were also broadly similar to those used in the final evaluation report. As such, it was readily possible to compare the situation before the implementation of the PEF with the situation following the implementation of the PEF. Changes were identified and examined through discussions with staff, through the analysis of secondary data (which include minutes of meetings, project files and reports), through a series of interviews with staff and

[35] A comparison of May 1997 practices with practices in May 1996.

Board members and through observation and comparison of then current operational and administrative practices (May 1997) with previous practices.

8.2.2.3. The mechanisms used to analyse changes in key individual' levels of awareness

A small sample of the board members (4) and programme staff (3) interviewed (June 1996) were re-interviewed as part of the review process (May '97). These interviewees were selected on the basis of their high levels of activity within the Programme. The most active[36] board members were selected on the basis that they were the ones most likely to be aware of any changes in the operation and delivery of the programme.

8.2.2.4. The identification of other factors which may have influenced change

The preparation of this review also necessitated an ongoing review the regional newspaper (The Anglo-Celt) and the British and Irish national newspapers during the period May 1996 and May 1997.

8.2.3. The Implementation of the Laggan Review

The formal review of the effect of the evaluation on community development in Laggan took place over a two-week period[37] (Sept. 1997) approximately 3 months after submission of

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[36] Active is defined in terms of the regular attendance at meetings and other functions related to the Programme and in terms of their active participation at these events (this could be identified from analysis of the minutes of various meetings and through observation of ongoing meetings)

[37] The researcher was in the area (although not based in Laggan) for two weeks previous to this. This enabled her to organise and schedule meetings and interviews in advance. The researcher was also able to use this period to attend and observe ongoing community meetings. Thus the researcher was able to ensure the most effective use was made of the two weeks allocated to the conduct of the evaluation.

the final report (May 1997). The effect of the evaluation is therefore judged over the six-month period from March 1997- early Sept. 1997.

8.2.3.1. The mechanisms used to examine the extent of implementation of the evaluation recommendations included:

- Ongoing and informal discussions with community groups members and staff;
- Informal meetings with local residents;
- Observation and comparison of current operational practices through analysis of the minutes of community group meetings (March 1997 to Sept. '97).

8.2.3.2. The mechanisms used to assess the nature of changes that have taken place within the operation of the various community groups in Laggan

The extent of the changes which had taken place within community groups were identified in relation to the indicators of change identified in Section 8.2.1.2 and were examined through discussion with members (and staff) of the different groups, through discussions with local people, through analysis of minutes of meetings, funding applications etc. and through direct observation of community groups practices (September, 1997), in comparison with previous practices (March-May 1997)

8.2.3.3. The mechanisms used to analyse changes in individual community group members' level of awareness.

Five of the original 18 community group members interviewed between March and April 1997 were re-interviewed in September 1997. Their selection was made on the basis of their high levels of attendance and activity within the various committees. All the various community groups were represented within this selection.

8.2.3.4. An identification of other factors which may have influenced the 'observed changes'

This necessitated a weekly review of both the local newspaper (The Badenoch and Strathspey Herald) and the Scottish Newspapers (The Glasgow Herald & The Scotsman) and the national daily (The Guardian) from March '97 to Sept. '97.

8.3. THE FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW OF THE SUBSEQUENT EFFECT OF THE PEF

8.3.1. The Findings of the Cavan Monaghan Review

8.3.1.1. The extent and nature of implementation of the evaluation recommendations

Each of the 53 recommendations in the final report was classified according to the extent of its implementation. See Figure 8.1 for an outline of the findings of this analysis.

Figure 8.1. The overall findings of the review of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations (30/5/97)

Fully implemented recommendations	14	(26%)
Partially implemented recommendations	9	(17%)
Recommendations under consideration	7	(13%)
Non implemented recommendations	23	(44%)
Total	**53**	**100%**

A total of 43% of the recommendations contained in the final report were found to have been implemented (either fully or partially) while a further 13% were 'under consideration'.

The next stage in the review process was an examination of the nature of recommendation implementation. In order to do this, the recommendations were classified according to whether they related to 1) Programme development, 2) Programme delivery or 3) Programme impact. Figure 8.2 outlines the overall findings of this analysis by recommendation category.

Figure 8.2. The extent of implementation of the evaluation recommendations (30/5/97)

Recommendation Classification	Programme Develop...	Programme Delivery	Programme Impact	Total	% of Total
Fully Implemented	1	8	2	11	**21%**
Fully Implemented during evaluation process	3			3	**5%**
Partially Implemented	4	5	-	9	**17%**
Under Consideration	3	3	1	7	**13%**
Not Implemented (30/5/97)	10	11	2	23	**44%**
Totals	**19**	**29**	**5**	**53**	

From this analysis the majority of fully implemented recommendations were related to the delivery of the programme and particularly to the delivery of community development within the Programme. The high level of community development recommendations implementation was attributable to their relevance to the ongoing operations and their ease of implementation (The evaluation report outlined the systems necessary to implement these recommendations). It was also the case that many of these recommendations were developed in close collaboration with programme staff. All the recommendations implemented during the evaluation process were relatively simple to implement and directly related to the operation of the Board. The effect of their implementation was not what the evaluator had anticipated. For example, the recommendation 'to circulate the minutes of the Assessment sub-committee meetings in advance of the Board meeting' which was implemented during the evaluation process, while it was expected to increase the time available for policy discussion, in reality was used to enable Board meetings to finish earlier.

The majority of 'partially implemented' recommendations related to the delivery of the programme. Their implementation requires a considerable and ongoing commitment of staff time and often-substantial change in existing practices. The review also identified 7 (13%) recommendations that were under consideration. Recommendations were classified as 'under consideration' if they were found to be the subject of ongoing discussion (by either Board members and or programme staff). 'Consideration' does not necessarily imply implementation; however, the act of consideration was an important outcome in its own right, given that it provided evaluation participants with an opportunity to question (and thereby strengthen) existing practices.

21 (44%) recommendations were 'not implemented' at the time of the review (30/5/97). The review found nothing to preclude their implementation in the future. Two of these required the involvement of other agencies, which made their implementation more complex and time consuming. Of the remainder, half related to the longer-term development of the programme, CMRDCS and the CMRDCS Board in particular. Their implementation would therefore involve substantial changes in current operational practices and a greater level of involvement by Board members, many of whom are already fully committed. The remainder related to changes in the operation and delivery of the programme and particularly monitoring and evaluation practices. Changes to existing practices can, however, take a substantial amount of time. As such, these changes make take a more time to introduce and implement than the timing of the review would allow (i.e. longer than 6 months). This lack of implementation may also be related to the existence of ongoing uncertainties at the time of the review in relation to the overall future of the LEADER programme in general.

8.3.1.1.b. The nature of implementation of the evaluation recommendations

The extent of implementation of the evaluation recommendations cannot be fully determined without some consideration of the nature of change involved. Each recommendation was therefore examined and classified according to the level of change involved, under the following headings:

- An existing practice (involves no real change, simply reinforces the importance of ongoing implementation);
- A simple one-off change in a practice;
- The extension of an existing practice (small changes in existing practices);
- The development of an existing practice (a substantial change in an existing practice);
- An innovative change (the introduction of a new practice).

Figure 8.3 classifies each recommendation category (identified in Figure 8.2) according to the nature of change involved.

Figure 8.3. The relationship between the level of implementation and the nature of change

Level of Implementation	Existing Practice	Simple change	Extension of existing practice	Development of practice	Innovative Change	Total	% of Total
Fully Implemented	4		4		3	11	(21%)
Implemented during evaluation		3				3	(5%)
Partially Implemented			4	5		9	(17%)
Under Consideration		1	2	1	3	7	(13%)
Not Implemented (30/6/97)		2	6	10	5	23	(44%)
Total	**4 (8%)**	**6 (11%)**	**16 (30%)**	**16 (20%)**	**11 (21%)**	**53**	**100%**

60% (32) of the evaluation recommendations involved either the extension or the development of an existing practice, half of which were 'implemented' or 'under

consideration'. Of the eleven 'fully implemented'[38] recommendations 4 (representing 36.5% of the fully implemented recommendations) related to the extension or the development of existing practices while more than 3 (representing 27% of the fully implemented recommendations) involved the introduction of 'innovative changes'. These findings suggest that the complexity of change involved in the implementation of a particular recommendation was not the crucial factor in determining whether a particular recommendation was implemented. They also suggest that in it may be less complex to introduce new practices, than to substantially alter or develop existing practises. The full implementation of 3 'innovative changes' is a positive reflection of the openness of the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme to the introduction of innovation.

8.3.1.1.c. The role of staff in the recommendation implementation

Programme staff were actively involved in the development of some recommendations. This section aims to examine the role of staff involvement in recommendation implementation. In order to undertake this analysis, each recommendation was classified according to:

1) The extent of implementation (fully implemented, not implemented, etc.). This gives it its quadrant location.

2) The complexity of change

Each recommendation was classified according to whether it involved 'the maintenance of an existing practice', 'the introduction of a simple one off change', 'the extension of an existing practice', 'the development of an existing practice' or 'the introduction of an innovative practice' this gave it its location on the X axis.

[38] The category of 'fully implemented' includes the three recommendations that were fully implemented during the evaluation process.

3) The degree of staff involvement

Each recommendation is classified into one of the following categories: 'no staff involvement', 'low level of staff involvement'[39], 'medium level of staff involvement'[40], 'high level of staff involvement'[41] and 'ongoing staff involvement'[42] throughout the evaluation process, this gave it its location on the Y-axis.

These categorisations enabled each recommendation to be plotted on Figure 8.4. In order to avoid confusion each recommendation is simply marked by a circle.

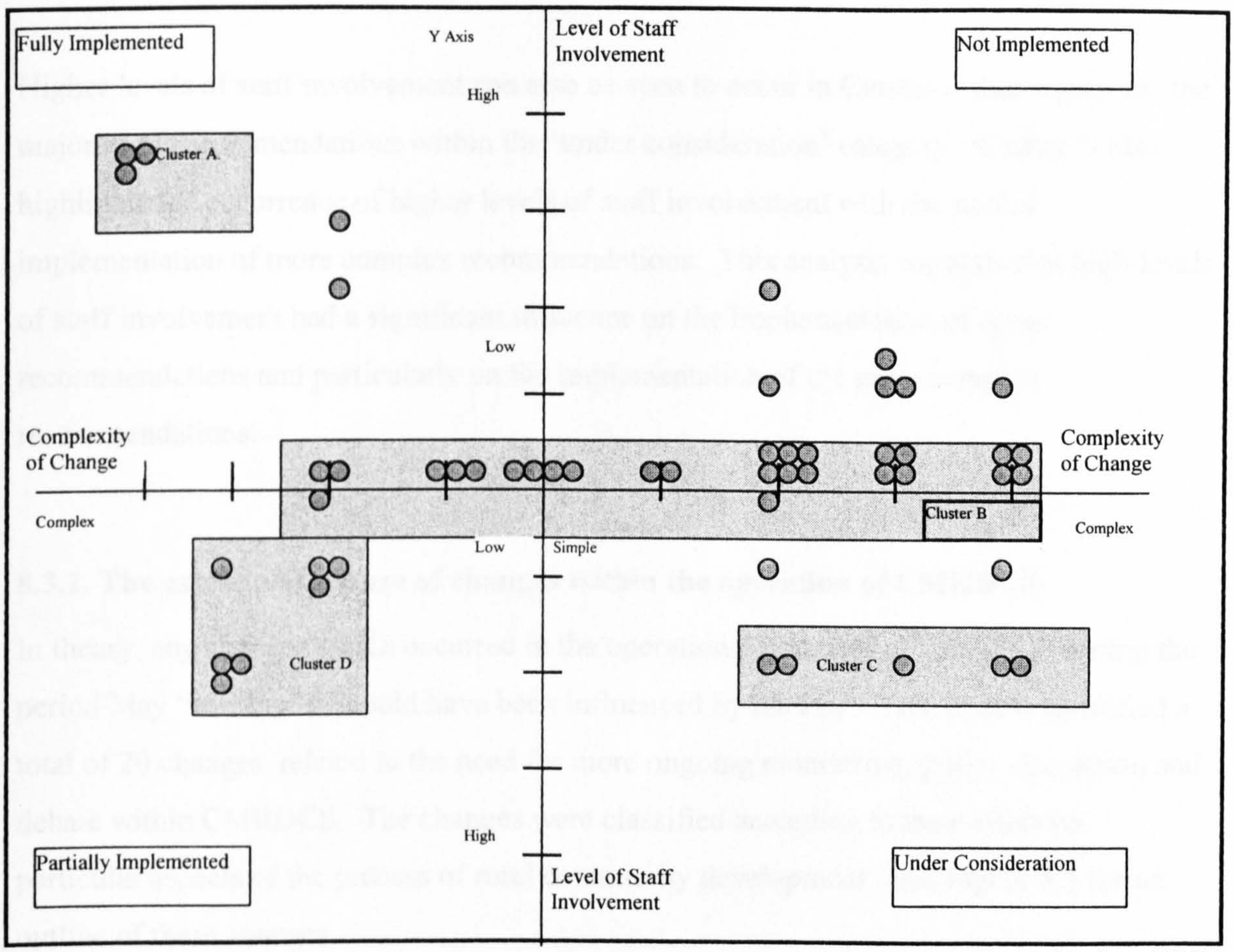
[39] A 'low level of staff involvement' is taken to represent the situation where a recommendation has been discussed on a one off basis with programme staff.

[40] A 'medium level of staff involvement' represents the situation where a recommendation has been discussed on more than one occasion with programme staff.

[41] A 'high level of staff involvement' represents the situation where recommendations have been raised and discussed in some depth with Programme staff and where the staff identified the recommendation without prompting.

[42] ' Ongoing staff involvement represents the situations where a number of programme staff have become actively involved on an ongoing basis in the development and refinement of a particular recommendation.

Figure 8.4. The relationships between the levels of staff involvement, the complexity of the recommendation and its level of implementation



(Author, 1997)

A number of different clusters of recommendations (A, B, C and D) were subsequently identified. The majorities of recommendations fell within Cluster B and involved relatively little active staff involvement and are clustered around the X-axis (the complexity of change). The effect of low levels of staff involvement is particularly visible in the non-implemented quadrant. This contrasts with Cluster A. where high levels of staff involvement coincided with the full implementation of a number of very complex recommendations. These recommendations included: the introduction of a system to classify & monitor the progress of community groups; the introduction of a system to monitor and record the type, nature and quantity of supports provided to community groups

and the introduction of a weekly diary for the community development officers and a system for logging 'out of hours' work.

Higher levels of staff involvement can also be seen to occur in Cluster C that represents the majority of recommendations within the 'under consideration' category. Cluster D also highlights the occurrence of higher levels of staff involvement with the partial implementation of more complex recommendations. This analysis suggests that high levels of staff involvement had a significant influence on the implementation of some recommendations and particularly on the implementation of the more complex recommendations.

8.3.2. The extent and nature of changes within the operation of CMRDCS

In theory, any changes which occurred in the operational practices of CMRDCS during the period May '96-May '97 could have been influenced by the PEF. This review identified a total of 20 changes, related to the need for more ongoing monitoring, policy discussion and debate within CMRDCS. The changes were classified according to their effect on particular aspects of the process of rural community development. See Figure 8.5 for an outline of these changes.

Figure 8.5. An outline of the changes within CMRDCS

(During the period May '96-May '97)

Type of Change	No. of Changes
Changes affecting the development of human capacity	7
Changes the priority attached to innovation and enterprise	2
Changes the priority placed on the development of local partnerships	3
Changes the level and nature of participation within CMRDCS	4
Changes affecting forward planning within CMRDCS	4
Total No. of Changes	20

Each change was subsequently examined in an attempt to determine its cause (or causes) and the role of the PEF in this process. Given the complexities of the processes involved, it was only possible to identify the major influences on a particular change. The effect of the PEF on a particular change was subsequently determined through a process of interview, discussion, debate and observation, with each changes classified under one of the following headings:

- No effect (the PEF did not influence the change)
- Raised awareness (the PEF raised awareness of the issue)
- Significant role (the PEF played a significant role in the change)
- Most probable cause (the PEF was the most probable cause of the change)

See Figure 8.6 for the details of this analysis

Figure 8.6. An extract from the analysis of the different types of changes in the operation of CMRDCS (which occurred between May '96 - May '97)

Type of Change	Changes	Cause of Change	Role of Evaluation
Human Capacity	1. Preparation of regular circulars for community groups	Awareness of need to keep communities better informed	Raised awareness
	2. Establishment of new training courses	Natural development of Training Programme	No effect
	3. Review of community groups initiated	Need to monitor community groups	Raised awareness
	4. Adoption and use of a community group classification system	Awareness of need to monitor groups progress and development officer inputs	Evaluation most probable cause
	5. Organisation of information evenings	Need to target new areas	Raised awareness
	6. Development Officers keep detailed work diaries	Need to monitor work	Significant role
	7. Establishment of an animation file	To show Dept of Agriculture appointed LEADER II evaluator	Raised awareness
Innovation	8. New training courses	Response to changing perceptions of local needs	No effect
	9. New staff appointments	New opportunities for development & new sources of funding	No effect
Partnership	10. Jointly run training courses	Availability of funding from other agencies with common objectives	No effect
	11. Jointly run information evenings & cross border meetings	Need to co-ordinate different agencies activities & good working relationships between agencies	No effect

	12. Participation in the County Strategy Group partnership has been stopped for the present	Future of local government is uncertain awaiting publication of strategy document	No effect
Participation	13. Attendance at Board meetings falls	Board members cannot sustain commitment	Raise awareness
	14. Four new subgroups established	Recognition of need for new & specialist inputs	Raise awareness
	15. Board members attend subcommittee/subgroup meetings more regularly than Board meetings	These meetings are more focused, their purpose and role is clearer	Raise awareness
	16. Some very active Board members have become members of some additional subcommittees/groups	Keen to be fully involved	Raise awareness
Forward Planning	17. Review of progress undertaken	Part of bid for additional funding under LEADER II	No effect
	18. More time spent on policy discussion	More time at meetings with changes in procedures & greater awareness of the importance of policy	Significant influence
	19. Staff meet more regularly	Awareness of need to co-ordinate staff activity particularly as staff numbers grow	Raise awareness
	20. Adoption of a more systematic approach to monitoring	Growing awareness of the need to monitor	Some influence

The findings of this analysis are categorised in Figure 8.7.

Figure 8.7. The effect of the PEF on changes in CMRDCS

(Over the period May '96-May '97)

Type of Change	Evaluation had no effect	Evaluation raised awareness	Evaluation had effect	Evaluation was cause of change	Total No. of changes
Capacity Building	1	4	1	1	7
Innovation	2				2
Partnership	3				3
Participation		4			4
Planning	1	2	1		4
Total	**7 (35%)**	**10 (50%)**	**2 (10%)**	**1 (5%)**	**20**

The PEF clearly had an influence on the majority of changes that occurred within the operation of CMRDCS between the period May '96 - May '97. The PEF was the direct cause of one change; it had a direct influence on a further two; with an indirect effect on ten other changes. It was responsible in particular for raising awareness of the issues of human capacity, partnership and forward planning, playing a particularly significant role in the implementation of changes relating to the need for more ongoing monitoring and policy discussion and debate.

8.3.3. An analysis of changes in key individuals' awareness of development issues

The review found a marked increase in individuals' awareness of development issues over the period May '96-May '97. The review identified a total of 14 changes in awareness levels. The causes of these changes were varied, some related to the growth in particular individuals skills and experiences, while others related to ongoing developments within CMRDCS. Given the multiplicity of factors involved, it was difficult to determine the exact influence of the PEF on a particular individual. It was also the case that individual responses could have been influenced by their attitude to the researcher and by their previous experience of development and their responsiveness to change.

Figure 8.8 outlines the main findings of this analysis, it also provides some indication of the causes of particular changes. The influence of the PEF classified under one of three crude categories: No effect, Raised the issue or Some influence.

Figure 8.8. An analysis of changes in individual awareness levels (Between May 1996 - May 1997)

Type of Change	Changes	Cause of Change	Role of Evaluation
Human Capacity	1. There is a better understanding of rural development processes	Clearer presentations on progress by the community development officers	Some influence
	2. Greater understanding of the role of community development	Generally clearer community development presentations	Some influence
	3. Role of the Community Development Officers better understood	Ongoing contact within Development Officers through membership of subgroups. better presentations	Raised the issue
	4. Greater awareness of the problems of monitoring & evaluation	Increasing need to justify ongoing expenditure	Raised the issue
Innovation	5. Increased recognition of the lack of innovation within the programme	Growing awareness over time	Some influence
Partnership	6. There is greater support for the concept of partnerships	The majority of those interviewed are directly involved in partnerships	No effect
	7. There is greater support for the development of a one stop shop to provide development advice	There is a growing awareness of the confusion that exists about the number of agencies and the range of funding they can provide	Raised the issue
	8. Greater awareness of the role of joint projects	Direct and successful experience of joint project funding	Raised the issue

Participation	9. Increasing awareness of the decline in enthusiasm and commitment of some board members and the need to address this	Falling attendance at board meetings	Raised the issue
	10. Establishment of the subgroups with is seen as a very positive development enabling more people to become involved	Involvement of over 30 new people in the operation of the subgroups	Some influence
	11. There is an increasing recognition that the board cannot do everything, they need to delegate	Board meetings are long and fully occupied dealing with overseeing the operation of the Programme, there is little time available for policy discussion or debate	Some influence
Forward Planning	12. There is a greater awareness of the reactive nature of the board	Experience of working in the subgroups that work to develop sectoral areas has led many board members to realise the reactive nature of the board.	Some influence
	13. Policy development is seen as more important than it was	There is more policy development through the work of the subgroups and therefore more to discuss, in addition to which there is more time now available for policy discussion at board meetings	Some influence
	14. There is increasing recognition of the need for more liaison between staff	The prospect new staff appointments has meant that there will be more need to co-ordinate between staff	Some influence

The findings of this analysis are summarised in Figure 8.9.

Figure 8.9. The influence of the evaluation on individuals' awareness levels

Type of Change in Awareness	Evaluation had no effect on change	Evaluation raised awareness	Evaluation had some influence	Total No. of Changes
Human Capacity		2	2	4
Innovation			1	1
Partnership	1	2		3
Participation		1	2	3
Forward Planning			3	3
Total	1 (7%)	5 (36%)	8 (57%)	14

The PEF can be seen to have influenced the majority (93%) of changes in awareness levels particularly in relation to participation and human capacity. The PEF was also found to have had a direct influence on individuals awareness of forward planning and to a lesser extent human capacity development and innovation. It was interesting to note that none of the Board members interviewed referred to the formal evaluation report within this review process. They referred instead to the ongoing and often heated debates and discussions that resulted from the process of implementation of the PEF (see Chapter 6 for details).

8.3.4. The Findings of the Laggan Review

8.3.4.1. The extent and nature of recommendation implementation

The evaluation recommendations were presented both verbally and in the form of a formal evaluation report and a short newsletter. Neither the report nor the newsletter sent to Laggan on completion of the formal process of implementation of the PEF received the circulation expected. Due to an administrative oversight, the newsletter remained undistributed in the community offices, while the copies of the evaluation report sent to each community group did not circulate between committee members. This lack of circulation of the formal recommendations undoubtedly had an effect on the extent of implementation of the evaluation recommendations.

The report made 21 recommendations in total, none of which were prioritised. The choice of which recommendations were implemented was therefore dictated by local priorities. The review examined each recommendation and classified it under one of the following headings; fully implemented, partially implemented, under consideration or not implemented. See Figure 8.10 for a breakdown of this initial overall analysis.

Table 8.10. The overall findings of the review of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations (20/9/97)

Fully implemented recommendations	5	(24%)
Partially implemented recommendations	9	(43%)
Recommendations under consideration	3	(14%)
Not implemented recommendations (15/9/97)	4	(19%)
Total	**21**	

A total of 67% (14) recommendations were fully or partially implemented, while 14% (3) remained under consideration, with a further 19% (4) not implemented (by 15/9/97). The category of 'partially implemented' masked considerable differences in the extent of implementation between different recommendations. These recommendations related to a variety of issues (See Figure 8.11. for a breakdown of recommendation implementation).

Figure 8.11. An analysis of the type of recommendation implementation

Recommendation type	Total	Fully Implem.	Partially Implem.	Under Consideration	Not Implem. (20/9/97)
Informing the Community	6 (29%)	1	3	1	1
Local Involvement	5 (24%)	-	2	-	3
Local Effort	2 (9%)	1	-	1	-
Develop Confidence	2 (9%)	1	1	-	-
Strategic Approach	6 (29%)	2	3	1	
Totals	21	5	9	3	4

All recommendation types were implemented to some extent but with considerable differences in the extent of implementation. Those that related to the adoption of a more strategic approach to development for example were extensively implemented, while the majority relating to maximisation of local involvement, were not. These differences in implementation levels were related to nature of the recommendation and the level of change involved in its implementation.

Some recommendations were clearly significantly more complex to implement than others. It was therefore necessary to examine not only the extent of evaluation implementation but also the nature and quality of change involved. Each recommendation was subsequently re-classified according to the level of change that was involved in its implementation. The categories used for this classification were as follows:

• A simple one off change:	a simple one off change in a practice
• Extension of an existing practice:	involves small/minor changes in an existing practice to improve its effectiveness
• Development of an existing practice:	involves substantial changes in an existing practice
• An innovative change:	involves the introduction of a new practice or system

See Figure 8.12 for a classification of the extent of recommendation implementation according to the nature of change involved.

Figure 8.12. The extent of implementation in relation to the nature of change

Types of Implementation	A Simple one off change	Extension of an existing practice	Development of an existing practice	Innovative change	Totals
Fully Implemented		1	4		5 (19%)
Partially Implemented		2	5	2	9 (43%)
Under Consideration		1		2	3 (14%)
Not Implemented (15/8/97)	1		2	1	4 (24%)
Totals	1 (5%)	4 (19%)	11 (52%)	5 (24%)	21 (100%)

The majority 11 (52%) of recommendations involved the development of an existing practice. This was also the largest category to be implemented with a total of 9 (82%) of these recommendations either fully or partially implemented. The majority 3 (75%) of the recommendations which involved the extension of an existing development practice were also implemented. This is in marked contrast to the recommendations which involved the introduction of innovative changes, where only 2 (40%) were partially implemented.
It would therefore appear to be substantially easier to modify or develop an existing practice that it is to introduce a new practice in Laggan.

8.3.4.2. An examination of the extent and nature of changes that had taken place within the various different community groups

The time restrictions placed on this research meant it was not possible to determine the effect of the evaluation on each of the community groups in Laggan. This review therefore focused on an examination of the effect of the evaluation on the three most active community groups: Laggan Community Association (LCA/the Association), Laggan Community Partnership (LCP/the Partnership) and Laggan Forestry Initiative (LFI/ the

Forestry Initiative) /Management Company (the Management Company). The establishment of Laggan Forest Trust (LFT/the Trust) a new community group formed in the light of the findings of the PEF was also examined.

Groups[43] were examined under a number of headings in order to determine the nature of any changes that had taken place. The changes were examined under a series of headings (identified in Chapter 2 as the key processes in rural community development) as follows

- Changes in the levels and nature of participation
- Changes in the priority given to the development of human capacity/confidence
- Changes in the emphasis placed on the development of local partnerships
- Changes in how planning for the future is approached

Figure 8.13 provided an overview of some of the changes that took place among community groups in Laggan between 30th April and the 20th September 1997

[43] Because LFT was established during the evaluation process it was not possible to examine changes in its operation. It was possible, however, to examine its establishment an operational practices in relation to the practices of other local community groups.

Figure 8.13. An analysis of changes in Laggan community groups (Between 30/4/97 -20/9/97)

Development Issues	Laggan Community Association	Laggan Forestry Initiative/Management Co.	Laggan Community Partnership
Participation	Meeting more regularly	The future role of some members is uncertain	One New Member
	Change in Office Holders	No open meetings since Feb. but there is a greater awareness of the need, with a meeting planned for Oct. '97	Held Public Meeting 09/06/'97
			The Splash is expanded
Partnership	Working with the Partnership to find community office funding	Hoping to develop trans-national links	Working with the Association to find community office funding
	Seeking charitable status which other groups could use		Working with the Trading Company on local attraction leaflet
			LEADER II Meeting opportunity for all groups to work together
Building Local Capacity & Confidence		In the process of providing training with Rural Challenge funding	In the process of providing funding for training
Planning for future developments			Adoption of pro-active approach to local open meeting held to give priority to the Draft local Action Plan

Thése changes were influenced by a variety of factors and circumstances. The exact nature and extent of influence of the PEF was therefore difficult to determine with any certainty but the extent of influence of the evaluation on these changes was classified under a number of broad categories as follows:

• No Effect:	the PEF had no influence
• Raised Awareness:	the PEF raised the general level of awareness of the issue
• Some Effect:	the PEF had a small role in effecting the change
• Significant Effect:	the PEF had a substantial role in effecting the change
• PEF most probable cause:	the PEF was the most probable cause of the change

Figure 8.14 outlines the changes in the various community groups, the causes of changes and the role of the PEF in these changes.

Figure 8.14. An analysis of the extent, nature and causes of change in the way different community groups in Laggan operate (1st March '97-20th September '97)

Type of Change	Group	Change	Cause of Change	Role of PEF
Participation	Association	1. Change in office holders	Previous office bearers resigned due to work commitments	No Effect
		2. Meeting more regularly	New office bearers. Local awareness that the Association needs to take on a more active role	Raised Awareness
	Forestry Initiative	3. Future role of some members is uncertain	The Forestry Initiative is to be disbanded, some members will form part of the new Forest Management Company while others will resign	Raised Awareness
		4. No open meetings held	Ongoing negotiations with the Forestry Commission made it difficult to know what was happening	Raised Awareness
	Partnership	5. One new member	All Partners need to be represented	No Effect
		6. Held public meeting	Need to consult and engage wider community	Evaluation most probable cause
		7. Splash expanded	Awareness of the need for wider communication	Significant Role
Partnership	Association & Partnership	8. Working together to further fund the Community Office	Awareness of need to work collectively and pool resources	Some Effect
	Association	9. Seeking charitable status which all groups could use	Application for charitable status is expensive and time consuming,	Some Effect

	Forestry Initiative	1. Hoping to develop trans-national links	Awareness of the potential benefits through attendance at seminar in France. Enthusiasm of one committee member	No Effect
	Partnership	2. Working with the Trading Company to develop local attraction leaflet	Development of a long standing proposal	No Effect
		3. Held open meeting to consider LEADER II Action Plan	Awareness of need to plan	Evaluation most probable cause
Building Capacity	Forestry Initiative	4. In the process of providing forestry training	Need for local people to undergo certified training and the availability of Rural Challenge funding	No Effect
		5. Establishment of Laggan Forest Trust	Development of joint partnership with the Forestry Commission	Raise Awareness of Issues
	Other	6. The F Week	Enthusiasm of one or two individuals who devised the event to celebrate the Forestry Project and to bring different groups together	Raise Awareness of Issues
Planning for Future	Partnership	7. Adoption of pro-active approach to local planning through open meeting to prioritise Action Plan	Real need for local involvement in forward planning	Evaluation most probable cause

The PEF was found to have influenced 11 out of a total of 16 changes across the various community groups examined.

Changes in the Association	3 (the PEF affected 2 (66%)
Changes in the Forestry Initiative	5 (the PEF affected 3 (60%)
Changes in the Partnership	7 (the PEF affected 5 (71%)

The PEF had the most significant effect on the Partnership. It was also the case that the largest proportion of the changes related to the Partnership. The extent of influence of the PEF on the Partnership was also a reflection of its openness to change. The most important effect of the PEF was to raise awareness of a series of development issues, through debate and discussion. The PEF also had a direct influence on a number of specific changes, all of which related to the development of existing practices. The PEF was also identified as the most probable cause of a number of changes all of which related to the open meeting which was held in June to prioritise the LEADER II Action Plan (The Splash, Summer 1997 Edition, Page 1) This was a particularly significant new event in that it was the first time all the various community groups in Laggan had met collectively to plan for the future. It remains to be seen whether this was a one off event.

Laggan Forest Trust (The Trust)

Laggan Forest Trust was established to negotiate on behalf of Laggan community with the Forestry Commission and to oversee the operation of the Forestry Management Company. It was in the process of being established at the time of the review and was therefore formed in the light of the findings of the PEF. It is interesting therefore to note some of the differences between it and other groups. Among the most significant differences are those which relate to the way Trust members are appointed. The Association as the parent body must approve all Trust members. The Association also nominates two Trusts members. Members are drawn both from within and from outwith the community. The Trust has indeed also managed to attract some younger local members who were not previously involved in local activities. The Trust has also committed itself in its draft constitution to a minimum of two open meetings a year (unpublished draft Laggan Forest Trust Constitution).

The differences between the Trust and other local groups are significant. These differences can also be seen to reflect the application of a number of recommendations contained in the evaluation report (specifically recommendations 4.1.3, 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, see Appendix 3 for details). The Trust was as such, influenced by the PEF.

8.3.4.3. An analysis of changes in key individual's awareness of development issues

Interviewees had very different initial perceptions of what it was that constituted development and the different issues involved. Some viewed community participation solely in terms of membership of community groups, while others had a broader view recognising that participation takes a variety of forms.

'There are a lot of people who participate in the community without being members of any of the community groups...in their own quiet way they make very positive contributions' *(Committee Member Interviews, April '97)*

Given these differences in understanding between different individuals it was difficult to determine with any certainty the extent and nature of influence of the PEF on a particular individual. The influence of the PEF was also dependent on the particular individuals' receptiveness to change and as such it was only possible to categorise the effect of the PEF on a particular individual into three broad categories:

The PEF had no effect
The PEF raised awareness of the issue
The PEF had some effect (effect differed between different individuals)

Figure 8.15 outlines some of the main changes in individuals awareness levels with some consideration given to the extent of influence of the evaluation over these changes.

Figure 8.15. An analysis of the extent, nature and causes of changes in committee members' awareness of development issues

Development Issue	Change in Awareness	Cause of Change	No. of Interviewees	Role of PEF
Participation	• There is a broader view of what participation is about	Increasing recognition that different individuals support the community in different ways	2 (40%)	Raise Awareness
	• The development of the Forestry is increasingly seen as an opportunity for wider community involvement	Practical opportunities are beginning to arise as the Forestry Project develops	5 (100%)	No Effect
	• There is a greater awareness of the need to keep people better informed and to encourage their participation	Ongoing complaints from the wider local community that they do not know what is happening (particularly in relation to the Forestry Project)	4 (80%)	Some Effect
Develop Confidence and Skills	• Interviewees were more positive and confident about the future of Laggan	The start of construction of six new houses in Laggan. The start of Forestry training and work	5 (100%)	No Effect
	• Greater awareness of the need for training & retraining	In order to work individuals need the necessary certification	3 (60%)	Raise Awareness
	• Growing awareness of the benefits of local training	The very high costs and distances involved in training provision	2 (40%)	No Effect
	• Forestry Project is increasingly recognised as an opportunity	The advent of practical training opportunities and work in the forest	3 (60%)	No Effect

Promotion & Development of Partnerships	• There is a greater awareness of the need and potential for groups to work together more	Funding tends to be project orientated. In order to avail of this it is better to prepare one comprehensive application rather than a number of smaller applications	4 (80%)	Some Effect
	• There is a growing awareness of the central role of partnership in ongoing developments in Laggan	There is increasing awareness of the number of partnerships being established. The Forestry Initiative and the Trust are negotiating a partnership agreement with the Forestry Commission. Also a number of community groups are working together to prepare joint funding applications.	4 (80%)	Raise Awareness
Importance attached to Planning for the Future	• Greater awareness of the need to plan for the future	The prioritisation of the LEADER II Draft Plan and the Forest Design Plan have provided tangible evidence of the benefits of planning for future development	3 (60%)	Some Effect
	• Greater awareness of the need to involve the community in this planning process	The development of plans for future development in Laggan requires the support of the wider community to succeed.	4 (80%)	Some Effect

A total of 11 changes in awareness levels were detected (Sept. '97). The PEF influenced 65% (7) of these changes, raising general levels of awareness of 15% (3) changes and influenced 20% (4) changes more directly. Three of the five interviewees were very receptive to change and their awareness of development issues would appear to have increased substantially since the instigation of the PEF. Of the remaining two interviewees their awareness levels had changed little.

The PEF had clearly influenced a number of these changes. It increased awareness of the potential benefits of developing partnerships. The development of existing and of new partnerships was now recognised by the majority of those interviewed as crucial to further developments in Laggan. Interviewees' attitudes to planning were also affected by the PEF, particularly through their implementation and experience of using the draft LEADER II action plan to develop a work programme for the Partnership.

In general terms, all of those interviewed in September were more positive and optimistic about developments in Laggan than they had been. The commencement of the construction of six new houses in the village in Sept. 1997 can in particular be seen to have influenced this mood of optimism. They were all also more optimistic about the future of the forestry project in particular and were beginning to believe that this project could provide some real local development opportunities.

8.4. DISCUSSION: THE EFFECT OF THE PEF WITHIN THE CASE STUDIES

It is difficult to determine the overall final effect of the PEF within the case studies, given that it may take a considerable time for the influence of some of the changes caused by the PEF to be fully felt. It is also the case that there are ranges of other (often-contextual) factors that can be seen to have influenced the effect of the PEF. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, for example, changes affecting the further development of relationships between Board members and between the programme and other development agencies were clearly

influenced by the prospect of local government reform and the uncertainties this created. In the same way, changes related to rural community development can be seen to have been affected by the allocation of additional funding for non-community development projects, thereby altering the focus of the programme. Similarly, the effect of the PEF in Laggan was affected by the uncertainties surrounding the wider land reform issues and also the availability of external funding. It is almost impossible to determine with any certainty the exact cause of a particular change given that each change was influenced by a variety of factors and circumstances. It is also the case that a range of other additional unknown and unidentified factors may influence the longer-term effects of the PEF.

This review of the Cavan Monaghan PEF found that it had a significant effect with over half of the recommendations being considered, at least to a certain extent. The PEF was also found to have affected a number of changes in the overall delivery of the programme by CMRDCS. These related mainly to the development of local capacity and specifically to the work of the Community Development Officers but also to the need for better ongoing monitoring and evaluation of these activities. The PEF was also seen to have raised levels of awareness of the role and importance of participation, human capacity development and forward planning amongst some of the individuals responsible for the delivery of the Programme.

The lack of circulation of the evaluation report and newsletter in the Laggan case study was seen to have somewhat limited the effect of the PEF there. Despite these difficulties, the PEF was seen to have influenced a number of changes in the way some local community groups operated. It had the greatest effect on the Partnership in terms of the overall number of changes influenced. The extent to which the PEF influenced a particular change was, however, found to vary substantially. In some instances, it raised levels of awareness, while in other instances it had a more direct influence on particular changes. One event, which was seen as directly attributable to the PEF, was an open meeting of all community groups held in June 1997 after the completion of the formal evaluation process. It remains to be seen whether this was a one off event. The PEF in Laggan was also seen to raise individual

awareness levels of the role and potential for the development of partnerships between groups. It also increased awareness about the need to plan for the future and perhaps more importantly of the need to keep the wider community informed about community groups' activities. The PEF can indeed clearly be seen to have had a considerable effect on community development within both case study areas.

Chapter 9 is an evaluation of the PEF (in the light of evidence from Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 8). It uses the experience of the application of the PEF in the case studies to evaluate and assess the potential of the PEF to contribute to rural community development. Chapter 9 also reflects on the role of the researcher within the PEF approach.

CHAPTER 9. AN EVALUATION OF THE PEF

(WITH EVIDENCE DRAWN FROM THE CASE STUDIES)

9.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to firstly evaluate whether and to what extent the PEF developed and applied in the case studies was participative, and secondly to identify whether and to what extent it contributed to rural community development in the case studies. This chapter also considers the role and extent of the influence on the researcher within the application of the PEF. The chapter concludes with a reflection of the role of the PEF and participatory evaluation in general for wider rural community development.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 9.2 identifies a series of key evaluative criteria adapted from Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 that are used to determine the extent to which the application of the PEF was participatory. This section also examines whether and to what extent the PEF contributed to development within the case studies; thirdly it examines the 'trustworthiness' of the approach in general. Section 9.3 evaluates the application of the PEF in the case studies, according to these criteria. Section 9.4 in contrast reflects on the role of the PEF and the role of participatory evaluation for rural community development in the light of the issues identified in Chapter 3 and 4 and the key theoretical and methodological issues identified in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

9.2. THE EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Various arguments have been made within this research for the benefits of adopting a participatory evaluation approach. The aims of this type of approach were outlined in Chapter 3 and more specifically in Chapter 4 and are summarised in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1. A summary of the aims of the PEF

1. The promotion and facilitation of self-study, discovery, learning and empowerment at an individual, group, inter group and organisational level **(promotes capacity building).**
2. The provision of an inclusive process, which focuses on the degree of momentum achieved rather than particular outcomes **(promotes participation).**
3. The development and enhancement of the capacity of the initiative and its participants through collaboration **(promotes partnership and collaboration).**
4. The promotion of dialogue and understanding between participants **(promotes participation and collaboration).**
5. The equal representation of the interests of all participants **(promotes equal participation by all participants).**
6. The provision of a mechanism to enhance deeper understandings of the complexity of processes involved in rural community development **(promotes capacity building and learning).**
7. The development of a better understanding of project operations **(promotes wider capacity building and learning).**

Within Figure 9.1 the key aims of the PEF have been further summarised as follows:

1) The promotion of equal participation by all programme participants;

2) The promotion of capacity building and learning;

3) The promotion of partnership and collaboration between evaluation participants.

These aims of the PEF mirror the key rural community development processes of capacity building, participation and partnership development identified in Chapter 2. As such, the successful implementation of the PEF should contribute to the various ongoing processes of rural community development within the two case studies.

This section examines and evaluates the ability of the PEF to meet these aims and to contribute to key processes of rural community development with evidence drawn from its use in the two case studies. The actual evaluative criteria were identified in relation to the aims of the PEF outlined in Figure 9.1 and the identification of the key processes of rural community development in Chapter 2. These criteria also drew on the identification in

Chapter 5 of the tests (including 'trustworthiness' and 'transferability') necessary to determine the quality of community-based action research.

9.2.1. The Identification of the Evaluative Criteria

Five criteria were developed to evaluate the PEF. Two relate to an examination of the ability of the PEF to contribute to the key rural community development processes (of capacity building, participation and partnership development) identified in Chapter 2 and of its ability to meet its aims identified in Chapter 4 and summarised in Figure 9.1. Two other criteria relate to consideration of the overall quality and credibility of the PEF as an evaluation approach. These criteria related specifically to the level of trust that could be placed in the outcomes and conduct of the PEF, but also involved consideration of the transferability of the approach, particularly in terms of the nature and extent of resources required for implementation.

The fifth evaluative criterion involved consideration of the role of the researcher in the application of the PEF. The role of the evaluator in this process identified in Chapter 4 was that of a critical friend and in some cases an advocate for the programme participants. The role of the researcher cannot be regarded as either neutral or objective, in the sense of standing outside the process and as such must be considered as a form of intervention, that changes the programme under evaluation. As such, no evaluation of the role of the PEF would be complete without some reflection on the role and presence of the researcher in the case study. The five evaluative criteria are as follows:

9.2.1.1. To what extent was the PEF participatory?

This criterion examines the ability and extent to which the PEF applied in Cavan Monaghan and in Laggan promoted and facilitated participation. Did it simply facilitate a sense of participation within the case studies? It also examines the quality, extent and nature of participation involved in both case studies.

9.2.1.2. To what extent did the PEF contribute to rural community development in general and to 1) capacity building, 2) learning and 3) partnership?

This criterion examines a) whether, and b) to what extent the process of implementation of the PEF contributed to local capacity and shared understanding at both an individual and a group level, and in terms of the overall management of each initiative. This criterion also reviews the longer-term effect of the PEF on community development, through consideration of the influence of the utilisation of the evaluation findings and recommendations on rural community development in each of the case studies.

9.2.1.3. To what extent was the PEF trustworthy?

This criterion examines the level of confidence and trust that can be placed in the various different outcomes that resulted from the application of PEF in each case study.

9.2.1.4. To what extent was the PEF transferable?

This criterion examines and compares the ability of the PEF to be used within the two very different case studies. This criterion also examines the suitability of the PEF for wider application in other contexts and in other disciplines. This examination of the transferability of the PEF also reviews its flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances and to different purposes, together with an assessment of the extent and nature of the resources required for its implementation in each case study.

9.2.1.5. What role did the researcher play within the PEF?

The role of the researcher was clearly important given the collaborative and participative nature of the PEF. This criterion enabled an examination and assessment of the role of the researcher within each of the case studies.

These criteria were subsequently translated into a series of practical indicators. These lists of indicators, while not exhaustive, provided a mechanism by which the quality and effect of

the PEF could be evaluated in each of the case studies. The use of indicators also enabled comparisons to be made between the applications of the PEF in two very different case studies.

9.3. AN EVALUATION OF THE PEF IN PRACTICE

This section outlines the outcomes of the five evaluative criteria in the PEF in the Cavan Monaghan LEADER Programme and Laggan Community Development. These outcomes are as follows:

9.3.1. To What Extent was the PEF Participatory?

The nature of the participation involved in the PEF was examined according to a number of indicators of participation. These indicators included:

a) An assessment of the inclusiveness of the process;

b) An assessment of the openness of the process;

c) An assessment of the fairness and democratic nature of the process;

d) An assessment of the representativeness and the type of participation that took place.

These indicators were subsequently translated into practical measures that could be examined and assessed in relation to each of the case studies. See Figure 9.2 for a summary of this assessment of the participation involved in the PEF.

9.3.1.1. The inclusiveness of the PEF

Figure 9.2 indicates that the participation involved in the PEF was, broadly speaking, inclusive in both of the case studies, with all the main stakeholder groups represented and involved (at least to a certain extent) in the implementation of the PEF. The scale of the Cavan Monaghan case study meant that it was only possible to involve 10% of the total number of project promoters. The limited nature of this participation reflects the scale of the programme under evaluation and the sheer number of promoters involved. In order to maximise the representativeness of this involvement, promoters were selected to ensure

Table 9.2. An Assessment of the Nature of the Participation involved in the PEF

Indicators	Practical indicators of participation	The Cavan Case Study	The Laggan Case Study
Inclusiveness	Were all types of programme participants represented?	Yes	Yes
	Were all programme participants groups involved?	Yes	Yes
	To what extent did the stakeholder groups participate in the process (Full/majority/minority participation or a representative sample/s)	Board and Staff **full** Board members **majority** Project Promoters & Others **representative samples**	Local Groups & Staff **full** Group members & local residents **majority** Others **representative sample**
Openness	Was the design emergent & responsive to local concerns?	Yes	Yes
Representativeness	Were the evaluation terms of reference mutually agreed?	Yes	Yes
	Did the terms of reference represent multiple viewpoints?	Board & Staff Yes	Yes
Fairness & Democracy	Were stakeholders given equal opportunities to express opinions?	Yes	Yes
The level and nature of participation	Were the data collection techniques used, participatory?	Some (40%)	Some (50%)
	Were the project stakeholders involved in the evaluation design?	Yes	Yes
	Were the stakeholders involved in data collection?	No	No
	Were the stakeholders involved in interpreting data?	Yes	Yes
	Were the stakeholders facilitated to such a level that they were able to implement the evaluation without support	No	No

inclusion of all the different categories of promoters, at all stages in the application process under both the LEADER I and the LEADER II Programmes. In contrast, the small scale of the Laggan PEF meant it was possible to involve all the various community groups, community group members and local people in the process. The PEF also sought out local residents in Laggan who would not ordinarily participate in community activities. The nature of some of the local community groups in Laggan, who met only sporadically and on an ad hoc basis, made their inclusion very difficult. As such, a decision was made by mutual consent to focus the Laggan PEF on the activities of the three most active community groups, with some consideration of a new group in the process of establishment.

The active involvement and participation of other outside agencies involved was also sought as part of the PEF in each case study but was ultimately, and perhaps not surprisingly (given the busy work load of many of these organisations), limited to meetings with representatives of these organisations. Additionally participation in the PEF offered these agencies few tangible benefits. The researcher therefore had no mechanism with which to encourage and develop agency co-operation and had to rely on the goodwill of these organisations to enlist their interest and agreement to be interviewed. On a positive note, all the development agencies contacted in each case study did agree to be interviewed. It was also interesting in both case studies that a number of local development agency representatives involved in the PEF following their receipt of the final evaluation report contacted the researcher, for further clarification of a number of issues.

9.3.1.2. The openness of the PEF

The openness of the PEF implementation process was evident from the mutually agreed evaluation terms of reference and the emergent evaluation design and methodologies in both case studies. The proposal to use community meetings and workshops was largely rejected in both case studies (because of stakeholders resistance) in favour of the use of a mixture of detailed interviews and observation, and the forum of existing and ongoing meetings for discussions and feedback on the progress of the evaluation. This rejection of the use of these participatory techniques reflected wariness among programme participants

in relation to these types of techniques and also unwillingness among participants to commit to attend additional meetings as a result of the evaluation. The researcher subsequently used other techniques (focus groups, interviews and participant observation) which, while more time-consuming in their implementation provided a more in-depth knowledge of the various development processes and issues arising in each of the case study areas.

9.3.1.3. The representativeness and fairness of the PEF

In reality the Cavan Monaghan PEF terms of reference represented only the multiple viewpoints of Board members and staff. The sheer number and location of the promoters and other agencies involved in that case study effectively precluded any formal or co-ordinated input from these stakeholders in the establishment of the evaluation terms of reference. In Laggan by contrast, it was possible for all programme participants to be involved in the identification of the terms of reference for the PEF. It was also possible at this scale to ensure that all participants were able to contribute equally to the evaluation process, both formally and informally. The small size of the community and the local Laggan newsletter 'The Splash' also provided a mechanism by which the local community in Laggan quickly became aware of the evaluation and its progress.

9.3.1.4. The level and nature of the participation involved in the PEF

The data collection techniques used within the PEF were not as participatory as the researcher had initially anticipated, due to the input of the project stakeholders. As such, the researcher had to undertake considerably more data collection than had originally been anticipated. The participatory techniques used which included workshops and round table discussions, while very useful in highlighting the different opinions that existed within groups and between individuals, had to be supplemented by a variety of other more time consuming data collection techniques, such as individual interviews. The Laggan PEF used more participatory techniques (workshops, group discussions, group mapping, etc.) than the Cavan Monaghan PEF. The Laggan PEF participants were far more open to their use than

the Cavan Monaghan PEF participants. This difference between the openness of the case study participants can perhaps be explained by the fact that the Laggan participants had previous[44] experience of outside researchers and were therefore more familiar with the use of different data collection techniques. Moreover the researcher was more skilled in, and more convinced of, the benefits of using participatory techniques and was therefore more persuasive in their use in Laggan (the second evaluation).

Both evaluations were participatory at a number of levels: they both involved project stakeholders in the evaluation design (steps 1-6 of the PEF) and in data interpretation and analysis (steps 11 and 13 of the PEF). In neither case however, were the evaluation stakeholders involved directly in data collection. This lack of participation in the data collection reflected the already busy schedules of the stakeholders whose time was, in most cases, already fully committed. Moreover in Laggan evaluation participants felt that, due to the community's small size, local residents were likely to be more forthcoming with an outsider than with a local person.

The aim of participation is to facilitate and encourage local ownership and control (Chambers, 1992). In both case studies neither sets of evaluation participants were prepared, or interested in taking over and conducting the evaluation without support. This lack of interest may be a reflection of a 'lack of confidence' amongst case study participants in relation to their ability to conduct the evaluation. This lack of interest also reflected both the low level of priority afforded to evaluation in general and indeed an attitude that 'evaluation should be left to the professionals'.

In this particular situation, probably because 'the professional' was a student and the PEF formed a part of a research project and therefore was not an expense, PEF participants were happy to let the researcher get on with it.

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[44] A whole range of different groups have undertaken research in Laggan; the existence of research and media fatigue was identified as an important local concern in the application of the PEF in Laggan (See Section 6.3.1.2 in Chapter 6 for full details).

9.3.2. To what extent did the PEF contribute to capacity building and learning, and partnership in particular in each of the case studies?

The nature of the contribution of PEF to rural community development was assessed for each case study according to whether, and to what extent, it contributed to;

- Positive changes in awareness, understanding and capacity (skills and confidence)of the individual participants;
- Positive changes in the levels of awareness, understanding and capacity (skills and confidence) of the groups involved;
- Positive changes in the management and development of the initiative;
- The extent and nature of the utilisation of the evaluation recommendations;
- The development of the PEF as a self reliant and sustainable process.

These indicators were subsequently translated into practical measures, which were examined and assessed in relation to each of the case studies. See Figure 9.3 for an outline of the findings of this review for each case study.

Figure 9.3. An assessment of the contribution of the PEF to rural community development in the Cavan Monaghan case study and in the Laggan case study.

Table 9.3. An Assessment of the Contribution of the PEF to Rural Community Development

Indicators of Contribution	Practical indicators	The Cavan Case Study	The Laggan Case Study
1. Positive change in individuals awareness, understanding and capacity levels	Did the process promote dialogue?	Yes - It facilitated a process of ongoing formal and informal discussions at Board and staff level	Yes - It promoted discussion among community groups of a whole range of issues. It also established a series of ongoing formal and informal debates
	Was there an increase in individuals' levels of understanding?	Yes – Among those re-interviewed there was raised awareness of issues relating to capacity building and partnership development. The PEF also directly increased levels of understanding relating to capacity building, the need for innovation, partnership development and the role of and need for forward planning	Yes - The evaluation was found to have raised the awareness levels of the majority of those re-interviewed. In particular, it raised awareness of issues relating to participation, the development of confidence and skills levels and the promotion and development of partnerships. It also had a more direct influence on changes in levels of understandings in relation to participation and strategic planning.
	Did it build individuals' capacity?	Impossible to determine with any certainty	Do not know-impossible to determine
	Did the evaluation foster empowerment & self-determination n terms of carrying out an evaluation?	No - the evaluation would not have been conducted without the researcher; evaluation participants were happy to be led, they did not want to lead, the evaluation ended with the departure of the researcher.	No - the evaluation would not have been conducted without the researcher; evaluation participants were happy to be led, they did not want to lead, the evaluation ended with the departure of the researcher.

Figure 9.3. An assessment of the contribution of the PEF to rural community development in the Cavan Monaghan case study and in the Laggan case study

Table 9.3. An Assessment of the Contribution of the PEF to Rural Community Development

Indicators	Practical indicators	The Cavan Case Study	The Laggan Case Study
2. Positive change in levels of awareness, understanding and capacity of groups	Did the PEF promote dialogue between groups?	Yes - but only to a limited extent, i.e. only between Board members and staff.	Yes - the PEF enabled the groups to identify the potential of joint working arrangements, groups then met collectively to discuss the development of joint projects
	Did it influence the decision making process?	Yes (particularly in relation to staff)	Yes (In relation to the Partnership and Forestry Initiative in particular)
	Did it enhance shared understandings?	Yes (particularly at Board level and between Board members)	Yes (particularly among the three most active community groups)
	Did it build the learning capacity of individual groups?	Yes - of the Board and Staff of CMRDCS	Yes: Some Groups (LCP[1] & LFI[2])
3. Positive changes in management & development	Did it prompt direct action and change within the case study?	Yes - affected 65% changes (See Appendix 5)	Yes (affected 88% all changes identified in the LCA[3], 60% changes LFI, 71% changes LCP.
	Did it influence other forms of ongoing evaluation & monitoring?	Yes (it introduced a number of changes to ongoing practices and introduced a number of new practices)	No (there was little formal monitoring undertaken by any of the groups)
	Did it prompt changes in management practices?	Yes - The PEF raised awareness of 50% of changes and influenced 10% of changes (See Appendix 5).	Yes - Raised awareness of issues in LCA & LFI: influenced changes in LCP and LCA and was the most probable cause of series if changes in LCP.

[1] LCP: Laggan Community Partnership (the Partnership)
[2] LFI: Laggan Forestry Initiative (the Forestry Initiative)
[3] LCA: Laggan Community Association. (the Association)

Figure 9.3. An Assessment of the contribution of the PEF to rural community development in the Cavan Monaghan case study and in the Laggan case study

Table 9.3. An Assessment of the Contribution of the PEF to Rural Community Development

Indicators	Practical indicators	The Cavan Case Study	The Laggan Case Study
4. The utilisation of recommendations	Were the findings produced in a timely manner?	Yes - the findings were presented on an ongoing basis throughout the evaluation process. Copies of a draft of the final report were sent to Cavan for comment. The report was subsequently revised in the light of comments.	Yes - the findings were presented on an ongoing basis throughout the evaluation process. Copies of a draft of the final report were sent to Laggan for comment. The report was subsequently revised in the light of these comments
	Were the findings accessible	Yes -The report was produced 8 weeks after the completion of the evaluation process. This report was also presented to a meeting of Board Members and Staff of the Programme	Yes - The report was sent to Laggan 6 weeks after the completion of the evaluation followed by a short newsletter outlining the main findings of the evaluation.
	Did they address local concerns?	Yes (All the issues were identified locally)	Yes (all issues were identified locally)
	Were the findings sensitive to local values?	Yes (the ongoing input of evaluation participants ensured sensitivity to local values)	Yes (the ongoing input of evaluation participants ensured sensitivity to local values)
	Were the findings utilized and to what extent?	Yes 44% implemented (fully/partially) 13% under consideration (30/5/97)	Yes 67% implemented (fully/partially) 14% under consideration (20/9/97)
	By whom were they utilised?	The Staff and Board	LCA, LCP, LFI also LFT
	For what purposes were the findings utilised?	Changes in the operation of CMRDCS	Mainly for changes in the operation of LCA, LCP and LFI, also influenced LFT establishment
5. The self-reliance of the process?	Is the PEF likely to be continued?	Partially (systems established during the evaluation process have continued to be used)	Not without ongoing external support

9.3.2.1. Changes in individuals' levels of awareness, capacity and understanding

Figure 9.3 demonstrates that the PEF did contribute to changes in individual awareness levels. The process of implementation of the PEF promoted a process of dialogue between individuals. This process of dialogue continued in the Laggan case study following the completion of the formal evaluation process. The continuation of this process of dialogue, can in part, be attributed to the realisation (as a result of the evaluation) of the need for better communication between local residents and community groups. As one local Laggan resident described it: '*living beside someone does not mean you see much of them. Often times we are too busy just getting on with our own lives and living*'.

In both case studies, the PEF raised general levels of awareness of a whole series of issues relating to rural community development. It is difficult to determine with any certainty, however, whether and to what extent particular individuals' levels of understanding changed as a result of the PEF. In an ideal situation this would be done by conducting a series of interviews with a representative sample of programme participants before the commencement of the PEF, with a further series of interviews conducted following the completion of the PEF. The costly and time-consuming nature of this type of exercise effectively prohibited its inclusion within this research. A decision was made, however, to examine changes in the awareness levels of a small sample of active[45] individuals within each case study. The findings of this review[46] of changes in individuals' levels of awareness, while neither conclusive nor comprehensive (based on such a small and arguably non representative sample), does provide some indication of the influence of the PEF on a number of individuals' levels of awareness in each case study. No direct link could be ascertained between the PEF and levels of empowerment or self-determination within either case study.

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[45] The decision to use such a small and highly selective sample (only active and involved individuals were selected) was justified by the need to complete the analysis within a limited time scale and budget.

[46] Conducted through comparison of the content of the original evaluation interviews with the content of interviews completed some 4-6 months after the completion of the formal evaluation.

9.3.2.2. Changes in the levels of awareness, understanding and capacity of the different stakeholder groups involved in the PEF

The PEF influenced a number of changes in the awareness, understanding and capacity levels of some of the various stakeholder groups involved. Among some of the changes influenced by the PEF in both case studies were:

- Greater awareness of the different roles and objectives of other stakeholder groups;
- Greater dialogue between all the various groups involved in the PEF, which in turn enhanced shared levels of understanding, as a consequence of which unnecessary misunderstandings were reduced;
- More in depth discussions between groups.

In addition, the PEF influenced a number of changes in the decision-making processes of some stakeholder groups. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, for example, the PEF encouraged staff to undertake monitoring and evaluation in advance of decision making, rather than after a particular decision had been taken. The PEF also influenced changes within LCP and LFI in Laggan, encouraging both groups to undertake a more open and accountable process of decision making.

The PEF also clearly contributed to the learning capacity of particular groups in both case studies. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, the capabilities of CMRDCS were strengthened through the development and introduction of new systems of monitoring and evaluation for community development. In the Laggan case study, the PEF enhanced the capacity of LCP to establish and maintain links with other local groups, to develop joint projects with these groups and to jointly plan future developments though the forum of regular cross community group meetings. The Laggan PEF also enhanced the capacity of LFI through the development of a programme of ongoing information provision and communication with the wider community.

9.3.2.3. Changes in the ongoing management and development of the programme/initiative

In the Cavan Monaghan case study, the PEF influenced 13 (65%) of the changes in management practices detected during the period of the evaluation and review. However, it did not influence all of these changes equally. In some instances, it simply raised awareness of the need for changes in management practices, while in others it had a more significant effect, changing the format and content of Board meetings. The PEF was, however, identified as the most probable cause of a change relating to the development of human capacity, which involved the development, introduction, adaptation and use of a classification system to monitor and evaluate the ongoing progress of community groups within the Cavan Monaghan case study.

In the Laggan case study, the PEF influenced the majority (88%) of changes in the operational practices of LFI, LCP and LCA detected during the period of the evaluation and review. The extent and the exact nature of the influence of the PEF on these groups varied substantially. Figure 9.4 provides an outline of the influence of the PEF on operational practices in LCP LFI and LCA. The information necessary to compile this table was drawn from Chapter 8 which examines the effect of the PEF on community development in Laggan in general and on changes in the practices of LCP, LFI and LCA in particular.

Figure 9.4. An outline of the influence of the PEF on operational practices in LCP LFI and LCA

Community Group	Evaluation no effect on change	Evaluation raised awareness	Evaluation had some effect	Evaluation the most probable cause of change	Total no. of changes in each group
LCP	2	-	2	3	7
LCA	1	1	2	-	4
LFI	2	3	-	-	5
Other Groups	-	1	-	-	1
Total & Total %	5 (29%)	5 (29%)	4 (24%)	3 (18%)	17

The influence of the Laggan PEF on operational practices within LCP reflects its openness to change and its recent establishment. The PEF clearly had the greatest influence on the Partnership given that it was the most probable causes of at least three changes in its practices. It is interesting, however, to compare the different extent of influence of the PEF on these various groups. If recent establishment (the Partnership is among the most recently established community groups in Laggan) was a significant influence on the propensity of these organisations to introduce new practices, the Forestry Initiative (LFI) would have been expected to have introduced substantially more new practices than the Association (LCA) given its relatively recent establishment. In reality, the PEF had a more significant influence on changes in the Association. This was surprising especially as the researcher spent the greatest proportion of time observing the practices of the Forestry Initiative (given the high activity levels of the Forestry Initiative). The propensity of the Partnership to implement changes in practices is therefore best explained in terms of its openness to change, which may be a reflection of its broad composition (with members drawn from inside and outside the community). It may also be a reflection of the dynamic leadership within the Partnership (LCP) and the good working relationship established between these individuals and the researcher during the process of implementation of the PEF.

9.3.2.4. The extent and nature of the utilisation of the evaluation findings

The extent and nature of the utilisation of the findings and implementation of the recommendations of the PEF provide a good indication of their relevance and sensitivity to local issues, concerns and values. This varied considerably between the case studies. Figure 9.5 provides a comparison of the extent and nature of recommendation implementation in each case study.

Figure 9.5. A comparison of the extent and nature of recommendation implementation in the Cavan Monaghan case study and the Laggan case study

State of implementation	Cavan Monaghan case study % of total recommendations	Laggan case study % of total recommendations
Fully Implemented	27%	19%
Partially Implemented	17%	43%
Under Consideration	13%	14%
Not Yet Implemented (at the time of the review)	43%	24%

In the Laggan case study, 62% of the recommendations were either fully or partially implemented. This compares favourably with the Cavan Monaghan case study, where 44% of the recommendations were either fully or partially implemented. The differences in the extent of recommendation implementation reflect the differences in both the scale and the nature of the case studies. It was undoubtedly simpler to implement relevant changes within a number of smaller 'flatter' organisations than within a single larger organisation with a large administrative structure. Moreover, there were substantially more recommendations (53) identified within the Cavan Monaghan PEF (with 20 identified in the Laggan PEF). With hindsight therefore, and with the experience of the Laggan PEF (with its higher implementation rate and considerably fewer recommendations), it might have been more effective to outline a smaller number of recommendations with the expectancy of a higher implementation rate. However, the inclusion of a large number of recommendations raised awareness of a range of issues associated with rural community development within the Cavan Monaghan case study, which was a positive outcome in its own right.

9.3.2.5. Did the PEF prove to be self reliant and sustainable?

In order to contribute to the long term process of rural community development within the two case studies, the PEF should be both self reliant and sustainable, but in neither case

study was the PEF found to be sustainable without some form of ongoing external support. It could be argued that were this support to be provided over an extended time period, with a planned programme of withdrawal and training, the PEF has the potential to be sustainable within the case studies. The Cavan Monaghan PEF did, however, contribute to the overall process of monitoring and evaluation within the Cavan Monaghan LEADER programme with the establishment of a series of monitoring and evaluation techniques to monitor the progress of community groups.

9.3.3. To what extent was the PEF trustworthy?

The concept of 'trustworthiness' seeks to establish whether, and to what degree, confidence can be placed in the outcomes of the PEF. It included consideration of issues identified and extensively discussed by Guba and Lincoln (1994; 1989) relating to: openness, transparency and accountability, consistency, credibility, dependability and confirmability. Figure 9.6 outlines the main findings of this assessment of the 'trustworthiness' of the PEF in the two case studies.

Table 9.6. An Assessment of the Trustworthiness of the PEF

Indicators of trustworthiness	Practical indicators	An Assessment of the PEF
Openness, Transparency & Accountability	Was the PEF open and transparent?	Yes - the approach was clearly outlined with the design developed in collaboration with the evaluation stakeholders.
	Was it accountable to all stakeholders?	Yes - all stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process.
	Whose interests did it represent?	The interests of all stakeholder groups were represented in the process of implementation of the PEF, although not perhaps not always to the same extent. Special care was taken in the Laggan case study to protect the interests of local community groups. The reports destined for wider audiences excluded reference to sensitive local material, which could have adversely affected the operation of local groups in a wider development context. This material was presented separately to the relevant groups.
Consistency	Could the PEF be 1) repeated and 2) applied with the same outcomes?	The PEF could be repeated in each of the case studies, but the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF would be different given their context specific and time bound nature.
Credibility & Dependability	Is the PEF a credible approach? What level of confidence should be placed in the in the outcomes of the PEF?	Yes. Due to the use of a combination of good practices including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, constant checking of findings & interpretations through ongoing discussion/feedback and the keeping of a reflexive daily diary by the researcher
'Confirmability'	How 'adequate' is the evaluation process and do the findings flow from the data collected in this process?	It was adequate - the evaluation processes were clearly and systematically outlined in both case studies. The data collected was well documented and classified and so it would be possible for the researcher to justify the findings and recommendations in relation to the data collected and its interpretation.

9.3.3.1. The openness, transparency & accountability of the PEF

The process of implementation of the PEF was both open and transparent, given the ongoing involvement of the evaluation stakeholders in its design and selection of the methodologies. All the various stakeholder groups in both case studies were invited to participate and were provided with ongoing opportunities to contribute to the process. Draft copies of the final report were also sent to each group prior to its finalisation and amended accordingly following receipt of their comments. The participation of the range of different stakeholder groups in the process also ensured that their various different interests and viewpoints were represented.

In the Laggan PEF, a decision was made not to focus in the final report on certain material that could have had an adverse effect on ongoing community developments in Laggan. This decision was made on the basis that the final evaluation report was to be placed in the public domain and would therefore be freely available, to be used by any number of external organisations for whatever purposes they chose. The omission of sensitive local material was therefore thought necessary, in order to protect local groups and also to respect the trust placed in the researcher by members of the local community who gave freely of their time and energies to participate in the evaluation. This so-called 'sensitive' material was presented locally in the form of short briefings and presentations to the various community groups involved. (Much of this sensitive material related to local perceptions of particular individuals' motivations for their involvement in community activities.) In this instance, the researcher took on the role of advocate in order to protect the interests of local groups and the reputation of particular individuals.

9.3.3.2. The consistency of the PEF

The consistency of the PEF relates to the ability of the findings to be repeated firstly by the researcher and secondly by another researcher, if the PEF were to be replicated with the same (or similar) subjects in the same (or similar) context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this case, the PEF could be repeated in both case studies, both by the researcher and by another researcher, given that the process of implementation of the PEF has been clearly

documented. The findings of a repeated PEF would by its nature (given its dependence on ongoing local participation and local circumstances), be likely to be substantially different to the original PEF. As such while the findings of both applications of the PEF were context specific and time bound. Many of the outcomes of the process of implementation of the PEF, for example improved dialogue and the development of a greater level of mutual understanding were similar.

9.3.3.3. The credibility/dependability of the PEF

The credibility and dependability of a particular evaluation approach relates to the level of confidence that could be placed in its outcomes (Robson, 1993). The credibility of the PEF stems from the combination of a number of characteristics including the intensive nature of the process, which involves a prolonged period of ongoing observation. The use of triangulation (of sources, methodologies and data collection techniques) also served to ensure the accuracy of the information collected and techniques used to collect this information with the constant checking of findings and interpretations through a process of ongoing discussions and feedback within the process of implementation. The researcher also kept a daily diary relating to her experiences, and her experiences of the techniques, which contributes to the credibility of the PEF in that it documents the process of implementation of the PEF and details the rationale for various decisions made during the process of PEF implementation. However none of these elements in isolation can be said to render the evaluation credible; its credibility is instead derived from the combination of all these practices.

9.3.3.4. The confirmability of the PEF

The confirmability of the PEF relates to the quality of the data collection and interpretation processes that led to the evaluation findings. It asks specifically whether the findings of the PEF are justified in the light of the data collected. In both applications of the PEF the process of PEF implementation was clearly outlined (see Chapter 5 for full details). The data collection was well documented; notes were kept or tapes of interviews were made

(and later transcribed) and discussions were recorded and transcribed or notes taken of them. This information and data was subsequently classified and documented in such a way that it should be possible for an outside person to audit the PEF.

9.3.4. The Transferability of the PEF

The transferability of the PEF relates to the ease with which it can be applied and used in a range of different situations (Guba & Lincoln,1989). There are several different elements of 'transferability' and the PEF is subsequently examined in relation to each of these elements. Figure 9.7 outlines the main findings of this analysis.

9.3.4.1. The implementability of the PEF

The implementability of the PEF relates to the ease with which the framework was implemented in each of the case studies. The PEF was found to be relatively simple, if time consuming, to implement in both case studies.

Table 9.7. An Assessment of the 'Transferability' of the PEF

Indicators of 'transferability'	Practical indicators	The Assessment of the PEF
'Implementability'	Was the PEF implementable?	Yes - it was implemented successfully in both case studies (see Chapter 4 for full details)
Applicability	Was the PEF applicable in other contexts?	Yes - it was used in two political jurisdictions in relation to two different initiatives. The Cavan Monaghan case study was a large scale, externally funded, professionally managed programme based in Ireland. The Laggan case study involved the activities of community groups in a village in the Scottish Highlands.
	Is the PEF applicable to other subjects?	It remains to be seen whether the PEF could be applied in other sectoral areas but it is likely that it could given it applicability within two very different situations and approaches.
Flexibility & Adaptability	Is the approach flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances?	The PEF has an emergent design capable of adapting to changing conditions and unforeseen circumstances This flexibility was demonstrated in the Laggan case study when the evaluation process had to be stalled almost as soon as it had begun because the majority of groups in Laggan were unaware of the evaluation proposal.
	Is the approach capable of serving a number of purposes?	Yes. In the case of the Cavan Monaghan case study it served largely internal purposes, seeking to promote improvements in the management of the Programme. The Laggan PEF in contrast served both internal and external purposes. The process of PEF implementation of the facilitated internal debate and promoted levels of mutual understanding, while the final report was used both by local groups and by outside agencies.
Resource Effectiveness	Is the approach cost effective? Is the approach time consuming?	The overall cost of the evaluation is unknown but thought to be expensive given the time consuming and labour intensive nature of the processes involved. The formal process of implementation took over 20 weeks in the Cavan case study and 8 weeks in the case of the smaller scale Laggan case study. A considerable amount of time was also spent undertaking background research and in the preparation of the final evaluation reports and the newsletter.

9.3.4.2. The applicability of the approach

This criterion relates to the ability of the approach to be applied in a range of different contexts and in relation to different subjects. The PEF was applied and used successfully in two different political contexts. It remains to be seen whether it could be used and applied in other disciplines. There are, however, no reasons to suggest it might not be applicable within other contexts, given that the development of the PEF in Chapter 4 can be seen to have borrowed extensively from the use of participatory approaches in other sectoral areas.

9.3.4.3. The flexibility and adaptability of the PEF

This criterion relates firstly to the ability of the PEF to adapt to changing circumstance and unforeseen events during the process of its implementation, and secondly to its capability to serve a number of different purposes. The ability of the PEF to adapt to changing circumstances is critical in relation to its use in rural community development, which is by its nature a dynamic process. The PEF was indeed adapted several times, in both case studies, in response to changing and often unforeseen circumstances. The Laggan PEF, for example, had to be adapted when the researcher identified the existence of substantially more individual community groups than had originally been anticipated from the initial meetings with local group representatives.

The ability of the PEF to serve a number of purposes was clearly demonstrated through its application in the two case studies. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, it served the range of internal purposes identified by the evaluation stakeholders at the outset of the evaluation. These included the strengthening of ongoing management practices, the promotion of more open dialogue, and the development of greater levels of mutual understanding between individuals and between different stakeholders. In the Laggan case study, the PEF served not only the original internal purposes identified at the outset of the evaluation (these were broadly similar to those identified in the Cavan Monaghan case study) but also a number of unanticipated external purposes. These external purposes included the use of the final report by a number of development agencies. These various applications and uses of the PEF

would therefore seem to suggest that it was both flexible and adaptable within both case studies.

9.3.4.4. The resource implications of the use of the PEF

The decision to apply a particular evaluation approach is often determined by the costs involved (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). This includes consideration of the resource implications (particularly financial and labour implications) that will arise from the decision to apply a particular approach. The actual cost of application of the PEF is unknown, but thought to be high given its time consuming and labour intensive nature. The Laggan case study took less time to implement than the Cavan Monaghan PEF did. This was not surprising given that the Laggan case study involved an evaluation of a smaller scale programme. The time taken to conduct the Laggan PEF was, however, also reduced through an increase in the researcher's levels of competence and confidence, gained as a result of her experience of the Cavan Monaghan PEF. As such, it is suggested that the time taken to implement the PEF might have been reduced if an experienced evaluator/researcher were to have conducted the PEF. The PEF was also delayed in both case studies by difficulties of access to the necessary information. In both instances, the researcher had thought these issues had been addressed prior to the commencement of the evaluation. In reality, the practicalities of access to information proved more difficult that had been anticipated and in both cases delayed the implementation of the evaluation process.

9.3.5. The Role of the Researcher

The researcher, as the instigator and the facilitator of the PEF, had the responsibility to ensure as far as possible that it was participative, constructive, trustworthy and transferable. Specifically, she was responsible for attempting to ensure that the participative process was inclusive, representative, fair and democratic, with high levels of participation. The researcher was therefore required to treat each stakeholder equally, to accommodate and facilitate the participation of each group and to ensure no one group or individual was allowed to dominate the process. The researcher also had to ensure that she did not associate too closely with any one group or individual and thereby run the risk (by the

simple act of association) of alienating herself from other groups or individuals. This was particularly the case in the Laggan case study, where within a small community the actions of an 'outsider' were carefully observed.

The participative nature of the study required the researcher to locate herself centrally and in a neutral location where she was easily accessible to all. The presence of the researcher in the case study area provided a tangible physical reminder of the process of PEF implementation. This presence also facilitated informal meetings with staff and visitors to the initiative. In order to maximise the opportunities for observation and informal meetings the researcher also found it useful to attend a variety of local events of general interest. Attendance at these events also served as a good introductory topic of conversation for the researcher in local interviews, putting both the researcher and the interviewee at their ease.

The researcher had to ensure as far as possible that the PEF did not have an overall negative impact on community development within each of the case studies. In relation to the process of implementation of the PEF, the researcher sought to facilitate debate between stakeholders in such a way as to promote increased levels of mutual understanding and to avoid the development of intractable conflicts as a result of the existence of strongly divergent views. This was a particularly complex task that involved ensuring that all those involved were given equal opportunities to contribute with none allowed to dominate. Another important requirement of the researcher, in relation to the evaluation process, was to ensure interviewees, and in particular local interviewees, were comfortable and relaxed about the interview process. This necessitated the researcher arranging interviews at the discretion of the interviewee, in their choice of location. It is interesting to note in the Laggan case study that while all the original local interviews were conducted in private locations (in either a work or home environment, depending on which was the more private), the venue for the majority of second interviews (conducted as part of the review) changed to a more public location, reflecting an increased level of ease with the researcher.

The prospect of publication of the evaluation findings caused the researcher some concern, since, once published, neither the researcher nor the case study participants would have any

control over how these findings would be used. The researcher sought therefore, to simply present findings avoiding any attempt to apportion fault or blame, thereby avoiding unnecessary recrimination. In the case of the Laggan case study, a decision was made to exclude some particularly locally sensitive information related to the Forestry Initiative, from the final report. This information was presented separately to local groups. The decision to omit this information was taken in order to ensure that the PEF did not adversely affect the prospects of the Forestry Initiative at a particularly crucial stage in its development.

The researcher also had a responsibility to ensure that the PEF was implemented in an open, transparent, credible, dependable and confirmable way. This was done through the development of the evaluation design in collaboration with the various project stakeholders. The researcher had then to ensure that all the various stakeholders were provided with adequate opportunities to participate in the ongoing evaluation process. The nature of the data collection processes employed by the researcher also affected the credibility of the PEF. The researcher always sought to triangulate information sources and data collection techniques thereby maximising the accuracy of data used within the evaluation. The researcher also had a role to ensure that all data was carefully recorded, analysed and stored. This was done in such a way that it would have been possible for another researcher to use and access the information. Notes of interviews were written up in full as soon as possible after the interview, while taped interviews and discussions were transcribed in full. This information was also presented on an ongoing basis, as part of the evaluation process, in order to check the validity of data collected and its interpretation. The researcher also kept a daily diary to record her experiences and the progress of the evaluation. This became an increasingly difficult task as the evaluation progressed, given the busy schedule of interviews, observation of meetings, ongoing presentations and analysis involved in the implementation of the PEF process. The diary was used both to chart the progress of the evaluation from the researcher's perspective and to record the nature of the day to day interactions between the researcher and the evaluation participants. The initial introduction of the researcher to the Cavan Monaghan case study participants as a student affected the way in which PEF was initially perceived as 'a piece of student research'. This perception

was only gradually overcome as the process of PEF implementation progressed, but it did, initially at least, limit the commitment of some Board members in particular. The identity of the researcher as a student in the Laggan case study, in contrast, was overridden by her previous local employment in a nearby village. So, although none of the local residents in Laggan were personally known to the researcher, she knew many by sight, and was known locally by sight and reputation, given the proximity and recency of her previous employment. This local perception of the researcher as a development professional lent valuable credibility to the Laggan PEF. The researcher was quickly aware of this perception and the expectations it could generate, and was, in response, very careful not to make any unrealistic claims about what the PEF could be expected to achieve. This perception of the researcher as a development professional did however enable the researcher to partly overcome the locally held perception of research as an extractive process from which Laggan generally gained little (see Chapter 6 for details). Added to this the researcher also sought to assist various community groups where it did not compromise the process of implementation of the PEF.

The nationality and identity of the researcher as an Irish woman can also be seen to have affected the implementation of the PEF. In the Cavan Monaghan case study, the researcher was readily accepted and was familiar with the context of the programme under evaluation. In the Laggan case study, the researcher was also familiar with the context of development in the wider area, given her previous work experience. In addition, many of the local and particularly the local Scottish residents identified, with Ireland and the Irish - '*our Celtic cousins'* in a way they might not have done with other nationalities. The interview process was also facilitated by the fact that the researcher was female (Fontana & Free, 1994). This was particularly the case in the Laggan case study where the majority of interviews were conducted in a domestic setting.

9.4. A REVIEW OF THE PEF AND ITS ROLE WITHIN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this section is to review the potential of the PEF and participatory evaluation in general for rural community development. This section is divided into three main parts. The first part highlights the key strengths and the limitations of the PEF (in the light of its application in the two case studies) as an example of a participatory approach to rural community development evaluation. The second part outlines the potential of the PEF (in the light of its application in the two case studies) for rural community development evaluation and for wider application while the final part outlines the potential of participatory evaluation for rural community development in general.

9.4.1 The Strengths and Limitations of the PEF for Rural Community Development

9.4.1.1 The key strengths of the PEF

The participative nature of the PEF ensures that efforts are made to make the evaluation process inclusive by providing all programme stakeholders with an opportunity to input into the identification of the terms of reference and objectives and to participate in the evaluation process. This ensures that the evaluation process and outcomes have maximum relevance for participants. Moreover the PEF actively seeks to involve non-active participants in the evaluation process, thereby attempting to make the evaluation more inclusive. The involvement of programme participants in the evaluation process also secures commitment to the evaluation process thereby increasing the likelihood of utilisation of the evaluation findings.

The broad focus of the PEF on both the tangible and the less tangible outcomes of rural community development compares favourably with other more conventional (positivist) evaluation approaches (e.g. goal-based, decision-orientated and goal-free approaches) and allows the evaluation process to be both inclusive and comprehensive. The PEF is in addition, able to present non-expected outcomes in a way other evaluation approaches are not. The context-specific focus of the approach is another strength identified by Mannion

(1996) which can be attributed to the PEF given that it seeks to identify the internal and external factors affecting a particular initiative. This ability of the PEF to determine the range of factors effecting a particular initiative can in addition be seen to contribute to a broader level of understanding of the complexity of processes involved in rural community development.

Another key strength of the PEF is that it produces a whole range of outcomes throughout the evaluation process. Developmental outcomes, which result from the process of implementation of the PEF, can include increased levels of awareness and understanding and increased skills and greater levels of participation. These outcomes serve to compliment the key rural development processes of capacity building, participation and partnership identified in Chapter 2. Implementation of PEF can also result in the introduction of a series of changes in the practices of some evaluation participants.

The collaborative nature of the evaluation design and the on-going involvement of programme participants in the implementation process ensure the PEF is open, accountable and transparent. The nature of the PEF process effectively precludes the need for the larger scale statistical analysis thereby avoiding some of the difficulties identified by Midmore (1998) in relation to other evaluation approaches. The process of PEF implementation is clearly visible throughout, while the use of a range of data collection techniques and methods and the use of practices like prolonged engagement, triangulation and persistent observation clearly contribute to the trustworthiness of the PEF as a rural community development evaluation approach. The PEF is also clearly transferable as it can be used within very different rural community development approaches.

In summary, the key strengths of the PEF for rural community development include its participative and inclusive nature, its focus on the evaluation of both tangible and less tangible outcomes and its production of a range of relevant and timely outcomes orientated toward utilisation and implementation. These strengths are moreover enhanced within this chapter by the identification of the PEF as a trustworthy and transferable evaluation approach with significant potential for wider application.

9.4.1.2 The key limitations associated with the PEF

Limitations associated with the PEF can be broadly divided into two types, 1) those associated with the principles of the participatory approach and 2) those associated with the practice of the PEF. This distinction is important since it is not possible to overcome the limitations associated with principles, while practice limitations can (as the name suggests) be overcome by changes in practice. Limitations of the PEF associated with the principles of the participatory approach include: the expensive and time consuming nature of the processes involved; its dependence upon the willingness of the programme participants to participate and the attitude of the evaluator/evaluators; and difficulties associated with assuring inclusiveness and representativeness. The context specific nature of the PEF may also mean that the approach is subject to context specific limitations such as the ability of the evaluator to gain access to the relevant information and individuals. As such the PEF may work in some situations but not in others. It is also the case that the PEF does not examine or speculate about what might have happened in the absence of a particular project intervention nor indeed does it examine whether limited resources are used wisely.

A further limitation of the PEF associated with the nature of the outcomes of rural community development is the fact that the PEF does not provide very precise measurements of the tangible and intangible outcomes of rural community development. The fact remains that these outcomes take a variety of forms and include issues such as increased levels of awareness and understanding and greater levels of participation which are by their nature relative rather than absolute (i.e. impossible to place absolute values on) and generally context-specific. This difficulty with the measurement of the outcomes of rural community development and qualitative research in general (sources,) faces all those involved in rural community development and qualitative research. The researcher attempted to address this difficulty in the application of the PEF in Cavan Monaghan through the development of a classification system to chart the development /progress of community groups. This system while clearly did not provide an absolute measure of the outcomes of rural community development for communities involved in the Cavan

Monaghan LEADER Programme provides an example of a particular response to the need to measure in some way (See Appendix 2 for full details of this classification system).

Key practice limitations centre around the inclusive nature of the processes involved, which may in large scale applications require the introduction of a degree of selectivity into the participatory process. For example, in the Cavan Monaghan case study it simply was not possible given the enormous resource implications to involve all the different stakeholder groups across the two counties. In this instance, a decision was made to focus on a smaller 'sub-community' within the LEADER Programme, namely the Cavan Monaghan Rural Development Co-operative Society. By focusing on a 'sub-community' it was possible to implement the PEF involving representatives of the different stakeholder groups including successful and unsuccessful project promoters, Programme Staff, Board Members, Subcommittee and Subgroup Members and other Development Agency Staff. The inability of the PEF to be inclusive at a large scale in turn raises the issue of representativeness, which although partly resolved through selective representatives of particular groups, needs to be considered in any larger scale application of the PEF. The PEF is clearly more suited to smaller scale applications with a limited and clearly defined range of stakeholder groups as was the case in Laggan.

It is also the case that the outcomes that result from the process of PEF implementation by their nature may not always readily usable by policy makers. A further drawback of the PEF is its perceived dependence on the ongoing input of a researcher, which in turn contributes to the high costs and time-consuming nature of the implementation process. In many instances it may also be an advantage if the evaluator is an outsider. As an outsider the evaluator is better placed to develop working relationships with all the evaluation stakeholder groups at an equal level, rather than an insider who may be perceived locally to have a closer working relationships with some groups as a result of their previous involvement with these groups.

9.4.2 The Potential of the PEF

9.4.2.1 The potential of the PEF for rural community development

The ability of the PEF to withstand close scrutiny and to be used in two very different approaches to rural community development and examination demonstrates both the trustworthiness and the transferability of the approach within rural community development. The PEF is also clearly useful as a means of improving performance. The inability of the PEF to encompass all stakeholders in the Cavan Monaghan case study in particular would suggesting that objectives of the PEF (to encompass all stakeholders) are significantly more difficult to achieve the larger the scale of the initiative to be evaluated.

The participative nature of the PEF strengthens it as evaluation approach for rural community development and as a tool for rural community development, since it avoids the assumption of a clear link between cause and effect and the assumption of the existence of commonly held objectives. This nature of the PEF also ensures the purposes of the evaluation are mutually agreed and that the evaluation is therefore less likely to be captured by a particular stakeholder group during the implementation process. The mutual agreement of the objectives of the evaluation at the outset also helps to ensure the PEF is not undertaken for any of the covert purposes identified by Gregory & Martin (1994).

The participatory nature of the PEF implementation process provides opportunities for programme participants to express their opinions. This in turn reinforced the value of particular individuals' opinions and also highlighted areas where significant difficulties exist, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the complexities involved in the processes of rural community development. The participatory process can also promote the development of increased levels of mutual understanding and awareness among and between programme participants that are in turn important elements of the rural community development process.

A whole series of developmental outcomes can result from the process of PEF implementation. These include increased levels of awareness and understanding increased skills and greater levels of participation, all of which complement the key processes of rural community development. The implementation process and the evaluation findings may also result in practical actions/direct changes that facilitate and promote development. In addition, local consideration of the findings of the PEF, and in some cases, a decision to implement key findings (to a greater or lesser extent), can have a positive effect on ongoing developments. The experience in the use of the PEF to date would suggest that a greater number of findings were implemented in the smaller, more community-based initiative suggesting that it might easier to instigate change in smaller flatter organisations than in bigger organisations with larger administrative structures. This experience of the wider application of the PEF findings may, however, also have been influenced by the growth in the skills and confidence of the researcher given that this was the second application of the PEF.

The broad focus of the PEF on both the tangible and the less tangible outcomes of rural community development compares favourably to other more positivist approaches to rural community development evaluation (e.g. goal based, decision orientated and goal free) identified in Chapter 3. The context-specific focus of the PEF can also be seen to be important in the identification of the range of internal and external factors affecting a particular programme thereby also increasing general levels of understanding of the processes involved in rural community development.

9.4.2.2. The wider potential of the PEF

The previous section has highlighted the significant potential benefits of the PEF for application in smaller scale rural community development initiatives. However, the PEF also has benefits for use within specific elements of larger scale rural community development initiatives. The potential of the PEF for application in other situations that may or may not have strong participatory and/or community development components remains to be determined. There are, however, no reasons why the PEF could not be used

as a free standing technique for the evaluation of any project/ or element of a project which involves groups of people working together for a common purpose. The application of the PEF could for example be used in conjunction with other evaluation approaches to learn about and improve the development of the human resources dimension of a particular initiative. The potential for the wider application of the principles is only limited by the ability of the evaluation participants to mutually agree the purpose and terms of reference of the evaluation. For example while technically it should be possible for the PEF to be used to ascertain community reflections on a top down development intervention, it would be difficult to imagine all the various project stakeholders mutually agreeing this as the evaluation purpose. Without this agreement and the ongoing involvement of all the different stakeholders the PEF become so diluted that it could be considered a participatory approach in name alone.

9.4.3 The Potential of Participatory Evaluation for Rural Community Development

Using the PEF as an example of a particular application of a locally constructed participatory evaluation approach, the earlier part of this chapter demonstrates the potential and the ability of this approach to contribute to rural community development evaluation and to rural community development itself. The implementation of the participatory evaluation approach can in addition change the nature of the relationship between the different programme participants by attempting to provide each group with a voice in a way other approaches do not. The main purpose of the participatory approach can be seen to be the provision of an inclusive mechanism through which evaluation participants in particular can learn and improve and through which the wider community can gain a greater understanding of the complexities of the processes involved in rural community development. These purposes contrast sharply with other more positivist evaluation approaches. The goal orientated evaluation approach, for example, focuses on the assessment of tangible achievements while other approaches focus on determining the effectiveness of methods of delivery.

Participatory evaluation is, however, obviously not a panacea for the problems of rural community development evaluation nor does it deliver any more people from poverty than any other evaluation strategy. It is not better that other more positivist/analytical evaluation approaches; it is quite simply different. It serves different purposes and is implemented in a different way. No one approach provides a complete answer. They clearly all have their own strengths and weaknesses and the choice of which evaluation approach is used will be determined by the purpose and the intended end use of the evaluation with clear scope for triangulation between different evaluation approaches. There is, in addition, no good reason why a number of different evaluation approaches might not be combined within a larger overall evaluation depending on its purpose.

The overall significance of the PEF and participatory evaluation for rural community development is that it provides a mechanism through which the processes and the complexities associated with rural community development can be identified and highlighted by those most closely involved. This in turn creates a greater understanding of these processes and a mechanism for learning about these ongoing processes at a local and at a wider level.

9.4.4. The Next Stage

Chapter 10 goes on to broaden this discussion of the PEF to reflect on the implications of the overall research approach for theories of rural community development and rural development. Chapter 10 also examines the nature of the overall research methodology used with particular emphasis on the validity of the research methodologies and techniques used, researcher influence and the transferability of the research methodology and techniques used to other circumstances.

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSIONS ON THE RESEARCH

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this final chapter are twofold. Firstly if reflects on the validity of the methodology used to conduct the research and secondly, it examines the implications of this research for rural community development theory in particular and for rural development theory in general. This chapter serves to complement the examination in Chapter 9 of the potential of the PEF in particular and participatory evaluation in general for rural community development through its examination of the overall validity of this research and its implications for rural development and rural community development theories.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In Part 1, the research methodology the nature and the validity of the research is reflected on. Section 10.2 examines the validity of the methodology, the approach and the techniques used to undertake the research. Section 10.3 complements this examination through reflection on the influence of the researcher on the study. Part 1 concludes in Section 10.4 with consideration of the transferability of the methodology and techniques used to other circumstances. Part 2, The Research Findings, is divided into three sections. Section 10.5 reflects on the implications of the research findings for rural community development. Section 10.6 reflects on the implications of the research for rural development theory in general and on the nature of the relationship between rural development and rural community development. Section 10.7 concludes with an identification of some key areas for future research.

PART I THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

10.2 THE VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES

10.2.1 The Validity of the Research Methodology

10.2.1.1 The constructivist approach

The adoption of a constructivist research approach was clearly influenced by the process orientated, context-specific and local nature of rural community and the process-orientated nature of the research hypothesis. Among the advantages of this approach was, as Narayan (1993) argued, that it provided a mechanism which enabled the exploration of experiential knowledge, the acknowledgement of local values, the illumination of multiple perspectives and possible conflicts and the examination of the multiplicity of rural development objectives. As Padaki (1995) stated, this approach provided a focus for process outcomes that could consider both the non-occurrence of expected outcomes and occurrence of unexpected outcomes. This approach also offered as Green (1994) suggested a flexible and an adaptable methodology within which it was possible to use a whole range of different research techniques.

Limitations associated with the application of this approach included the lack of any direct measurement. Within this research there is an absence of direct measurement even at a benchmarking level (except within the actual case study reports) thereby suggesting that evaluation is relativistic. This lack of measurement is partly explained by the focus within the research on process outcomes (capacity building, participation, etc.) that are by their nature difficult to measure whatever research approach is adopted. This lack of measurement[47] was also influenced by the absence of any baseline[48] information within

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[47] The development of a classification system to chart the progress of groups involved in the Cavan Monaghan case study represented an attempt to measure these process outcomes.

[48] The implementation of the PEF in the case studies could however fulfil this baseline role for any subsequent studies in either location.

either case study with which to measure the direction, nature and extent of change. The selection of substantially different case studies did not promote the need for measurement given that direct comparison between case studies findings was largely meaningless. In hindsight, the selection of similar case studies might have highlighted the greater need for measurement. Upon re-examination, it is also the case that there may have been more scope within this research for the incorporation and use of more quantitative techniques that lend themselves to measurement. The absence of any significant measurement within this does however highlight the significant and particular difficulties surrounding the identification and quantification of the outcomes of the processes of rural community development.

Another difficulty associated with the constructivist approach is that it tends to view each stakeholder group as equal, (thereby overlooking/neglecting value problems) which is clearly not the case where certain stakeholders hold substantially more power than others (Krogstrup, 1997). In the Cavan Monaghan case study for example Board members held a substantial amount of power, to the point that they controlled access to other stakeholder groups. As such, the question of who it is that holds the power and the extent to which they used this was a critical issue which in hindsight should have received more critical scrutiny within this research.

Other limitations of the constructivist approach include its inability to address questions of accountability or cost effectiveness (Green, 1994). These questions could, however, have been addressed through the adoption of a more positivist analytical research approach. The application of a positivist approach, while it would have focused on measurement and description, would not have addressed the fundamental, social, political and value orientated character of rural community development. Positivist approaches also depend more heavily than constructivist approaches on larger scale statistical analysis which is substantially less meaningful at a small-scale local level (Midmore, 1998). At a more fundamental level, positivist approaches were unsuitable for the purposes of this research because of their dependence on the assumed existence of a clear link between cause and effect. There is rarely a clear link between cause and effect in rural community

development given the multiplicity of factors involved (Stern, 1987). In this instance, the constructivist approach, despite its limitations and substantial resource requirements was the most suitable approach to explore the diversity of views, a fundamental issue within the research hypothesis.

Community-based action research has two main aims: 1) to produce knowledge and promote action directly useful to the community and 2) to empower the community at a deeper level through the process of construction and use of their own knowledge (Reason, 1994). Community-based action research is, in essence, a form of constructivist inquiry into practice. It is predicated on the belief that the mere recording of events and formulation of explanations by an uninvolved researcher is inadequate in and by itself to undertake a comprehensive evaluation (CARN, 1996).

10.2.1.2 An action research approach

An action-orientated research approach which aims both to produce knowledge and promote action of direct relevance to those most involved in the research and to empower those involved in the research (Reason, 1994) was selected for the purposes of this research. It was selected because it provided the best mechanism to undertake utilisation-orientated research within a natural setting that would also promote informed practical change. The adoption of this approach served to ensure the researcher and the researched worked together in a collaborative way, thereby reflecting the inclusive nature of the research hypothesis. The adoption of an action-orientated research approach also enabled the production of knowledge and information that was directly relevant and useful at a local level, witnessed by the significant number of changes identified in the research and adopted by the research participants. Research participants were recognised as both subjects and objects of the investigation. In this way, the research can be seen to have acknowledged and valued the researched knowledge and ability to act and reflect. Reason (1994) argues that this process empowers the various participants at a deeper level, through the process of construction and use of their own knowledge. This research suggests that while this

approach clearly had an effect in terms of increasing participants' confidence and capacity to act, it is not clear that participants were actually empowered by this process. This is witnessed by the fact that the research required the sustained and on-going input of the researcher through out its implementation (i.e. the majority[49] of the participants were not empowered to such a level that they sought to control of the evaluation process).

The grounded nature of the action research approach had a number of positive impacts. It served to ensure the researcher could remain more open to unanticipated outcomes. It also highlighted the key role of situated knowledge and ensured the researcher was fully aware of the importance of this knowledge (Oakley & Calloway 1992). Other issues that stemmed from the application of an action research approach was the requirement for the active involvement of the researcher (Bateson, 1972). The ongoing involvement of the researcher with the research participants caused the researcher substantial difficulties challenging both her objectivity and her loyalty to the research participants.

The adoption of a less action-orientated research approach would almost certainly have minimised this problem of the degree and nature of interaction between the researcher and the researched. The adoption of a positivist research approach was, however, not an option given the nature of the research subject, with no clear link between cause and effect.
Thus there were no clear boundaries in relation to the nature of data required, nor limits to the study of a particular initiative.
The local and community based nature of rural community development also effectively meant that it would have been impossible to eliminate all extraneous factors. The difficulty remained that the successful implementation of the participatory approach rested on the active involvement of the researcher within the research process and on the active engagement of the researcher with the researched. As such it is suggested that the action

[49] A small number of Board Members did seek to take control of the evaluation within the CMRDCS as a result of their desire to control the evaluation rather that as a result of their empowerment through the evaluation process.

orientated research approach was, despite its difficulties, the most suitable and inclusive research approach for the purposes of this research.

10.2.1.3 The case study approach

The adoption of a case study approach for this research was influenced by the nature of the subject under investigation. Rural community development by its nature has no one single clear set of outcomes and so the ability of the case study approach to explore the nature of these outcomes commends it as an approach suitable for this research. The adoption of a case study approach enabled an exploration of the linkages between implementation and effect in real life situations that would have been too complex for other survey oriented or experimental strategies (Robson, 1993). One of the most fundamental strengths of the case study approach is its ability to describe a particular intervention in the real life context in which it occurred (Yin, 1994). In addition, the case study approach provided a flexible and adaptable mechanism through which a range of different research techniques were applied.

The application of the case study approach within this research was not without difficulties, not least of which was the sheer volume of data collected and the substantial resources involved in its collection, with only a proportion of this information used for the purposes of this research (Green, 1994). This problem of extensive data collection was further compounded in the context of this research by the participative nature of the research subject, which sought to engage all the relevant stakeholder groups within each case study. In the event, this was not possible in the Cavan Monaghan case study given the sheer scale of the study and the number of individuals involved. In this situation, a degree of sampling had to be introduced in relation to the project promoters stakeholder group. The introduction of sampling in this situation substantially reduced the overall inclusiveness of this research. As such, while the application of a more quantitative research based approach based on a representative sample would have resulted in a more focused data collection process, it would not have provided the necessary mechanisms to investigate the

range of different interests and groups involved in a particular initiative. This argument is supported by the observation of Padaki (1995) that the behavioural characteristics of a particular individual are not necessarily the arithmetical aggregates.

The selection of the case studies for this research was made on the basis of the opinions of rural development experts interviewed and on the scale and nature of resources available to the researcher in each location. In hindsight, the inclusion of a pilot case study might have identified the importance of the scale of the case study, which could in turn have led to some differences in the selection of the final case studies. The time-consuming and process orientated nature of the research (the application of the PEF) effectively suggest that any pilot undertaken (no matter what the scale) would probably have to have been included as a case study given the time that would been absorbed in this process. It could be suggested that the Cavan Monaghan Case study did in fact act as a pilot for the Laggan case study where research practices were substantially improved as a result of the Cavan Monaghan case study experience. Were a pilot study to have been included, the larger of the two case studies would probably not have been selected for inclusion. In the absence of this pilot the selection of two very different case studies generated some clear conclusions on the suitability of the participatory approaches for application at different scales.

10.2.2 The Validity of the Research Techniques

This research was conducted using a multi-method approach that combined the use of a range of research techniques. Each of the techniques used within this research has particular strengths and weaknesses and served particular purposes, while collectively they served complimentary purposes. Interviews were for example used to develop, as Gosling (1995) suggested, a better understanding of particular individuals or groups of individuals perspectives. Focus groups in contrast were used to explore the similarities and differences in opinion between particular groups of individuals as Stewart and Shamdasani (1998) outlined. This research also demonstrates that certain techniques served a series of additional purposes that were not anticipated at the outset of the research. For example,

semi-structured interviews conducted in individuals' homes in the Laggan case study facilitated inter-generational family discussions.

Each technique used is based on a series of inherent assumptions, which must however be acknowledged, as they collectively introduce a series of underlying biases and threats to the validity of the techniques used and the data that they generate. All these techniques, work on the assumption of the ability and willingness of both the participants and the researcher to tell the truth. It is also the case that participants tend to respond particularly well when involved in a particular study, or indeed in the way they think the researcher wants them to respond (Robson, 1993).

Triangulation was the main mechanism used within this research to crosscheck data from different sources and different techniques (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Triangulation can also be applied in relation to investigators and theories but these applications were not very relevant within this research given that it involved only one researcher and related to applied research. At a more reflective level, triangulation also provided a mechanism through which the complexity of data could be constructed and a greater understanding of the complexity and variety of different interpretations that exist of the social world could be gained. This reduced the occurrence of what Robson (1993, p.290) terms 'inappropriate certainty'. In this instance, the similarities, differences and discrepancies in opinions and interpretations were all of value, providing a mechanism through which ongoing data collection processes could be directed and re-directed to explore particular issues where there were substantial discrepancies and differences particularly between sources.

Scale was a key factor determining both the choice of techniques used and their level of inclusiveness. It was possible, for example, to use a much greater range of techniques and to apply these techniques in a more inclusive way (involving all the different stakeholder groups) within the smaller scale Laggan case study. The sheer number and scale of groups involved in the Cavan Monaghan case study caused substantial difficulties for the implementation of certain research techniques, with the temptation always to take the easy

way and focus on the easy way to reach participants. In this instance, an over reliance on what Robson (1993) views as accessible informants and events (who are not necessarily representative) and a willingness to accept plausible explanations (where inferences were drawn from non-representative processes) can be seen to challenge the representativeness of the Cavan Monaghan case study. Moreover, the nature of the techniques used (together with the subject and the focus of the research) was such that while they generated significant amounts data, little of this data lent itself to direct measurement. Almost all data generated was qualitative in nature in the form of what Geertz (1983) would term 'thick description' or what Krippendorf (1980) would term 'etic' data, that is, data that requires interpretation by the researcher.

The introduction of a significant level of interpretation means that data can be transformed in different ways to different ends (Wolcott, 1994). Interpretation introduces a level of subjectivity and an over reliance on what Miles and Hubermann (1984) term the human instrument (in this case the researcher). The scale and level of interpretation required and the lack of any direct measurement within the techniques selected is therefore clearly a substantial threat to their validity. The interpretation within this research is clearly over dependant on the input of the researcher. With the benefit of hindsight the issue of interpretation might not have been quite so serious if more of what Krippendorf (1980) terms 'emic' data (i.e. data that needs little or no interpretation) had been collected.

10.3 REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCHER INFLUENCE

Examination of this research and the evidence of the researcher's diary would suggest that the researcher clearly had a substantial influence on all stages of this research from its design and implementation to its review and analysis. This recognition of the influence of the researcher on the research supports the findings of Stanley (1993), Oakley and Calloway (1992), Geertz (1988) and others. It is important according to Barrone (1992) to determine the actual extent and nature of researcher influence. In this particular instance, the identity and background of the researcher as a rural community development practitioner for a

number of years clearly influenced the choice and utilisation-oriented focus of the research topic and methodology. The choice of the research methodologies was also influenced by the researcher's fascination with what Hockey (1996) terms the image of the 'lone ethnographer'. In the same way the selection of the case studies was clearly influenced, as Delamont (1996) suggests by the identity and background of the researcher as an Irish female with previous experience of the wider research locations selected and a fascination with rural people and rural places. The research was also influenced and indeed at times driven by the researcher's desire to produce something of practical relevance. This desire to produce something practical at times overshadowed the academic focus of the study and the researcher required ongoing reminders from her peers throughout the research process that the research was primarily intended for academic purposes.

The researcher was used as a multi-purpose research tool within the research. She was required to adopt a number of different often contradictory roles, as researcher, as evaluator, as facilitator (Stevenson, 1996) as advocate, as negotiator (Useem & Chipander, 1991) as interpreter and as what Fetterman (1995) terms 'critical friend'. The contradictory nature of these different roles raised serious challenges for the research and for what Patton (1990; p.72) refers to as the 'empathic neutrality' the researcher. Among the challenges the researcher had to address were how to maintain her dual role as both participatory evaluator/facilitator and evaluator/researcher. An important balance had to be struck between the credibility of the researcher at a local level and the wider credibility of the research as a robust and valid piece of research (Patton, 1990).

The adoption of the role of evaluative facilitator in particular brought with it a series of heretofore largely overlooked moral responsibilities in the same way that Green (1996) identified a series of responsibilities associated with 'scientific citizenship'. In some instances within this research, the researcher's neutrality was compromised by her loyalty to the case studies and case study participants. This was particularly the case in the smaller case study, where perhaps because trust was harder won, and the relationships established

were on a very personal basis, the researcher sought to protect the participants at the cost of her neutrality. For example, the researcher's decision not to publicly explore the exact nature of the divisions between some local groups in Laggan was made on the basis of the need to avoid any additional external scrutiny of the groups at that particular time. This decision was also influenced by the sensitivity of the ongoing negotiations between Laggan and the Forestry Commission at that time. In this particular instance, perhaps it could be argued that the decision made by the researcher at the time was justified, but the reality is that the researcher was forced into a position where she had to choose on the basis of her beliefs and values.

Interpretation and analysis involved similar challenges to the evaluative neutrality of the researcher, in terms of how she chose to interpret different sources of data and methods of data collection and thereafter the weighting which was given to each source and method. As such the inclusiveness and the credibility of this research is as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest very largely dependent on the principles, practices and beliefs of the researcher. Recognition of the extent and the nature of influence of the researcher relied as Plowman *et al.* (1996) suggested on the honesty and the capacity of the researcher for self-reflection.

The all pervading nature and extent of the influence of the researcher on this research clearly undermines the overall credibility of the research given that is so dependant on the input of one particular individual. An alternative approach to enhance the credibility of this type of research for the future might therefore necessitate the researcher adopting a less participatory role within the research process (i.e. observing the implementation of an evaluation by a participatory evaluator or better still a participatory evaluation team).

10.4 THE TRANSFERABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

Transferability in this context relates to the ease with which this research can be applied in other situations or contexts. This concept of transferability is, as Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest, not unrelated to the notion of external validity, that is the degree of confidence one

has in generalising findings beyond the immediate situation of the original research (Rossi *et al.* 1993). The concept of external validity is not an appropriate test in this context however, because this research has been constructed within the constructivist paradigm where, with its uncertainty about cause and effect, it is not possible to make generalisations.

In principle, the overall methodologies and techniques used to conduct this research are transferable to other situations. It should, for example, be possible to apply a constructivist action research orientated case study approach to other situations and in other contexts, although in practice given the context-specific nature of the applications of these approaches, the outcomes of their application will vary hugely. It is also that case that in principle the range of research techniques and indeed the multi-method approach used within this research can also be considered largely transferable although again in practice the exact combinations and the synergy between the techniques will vary depending on the context in which they are used.

In relation to the transferability of research outcomes, the participatory and context-specific nature of the processes involved in this research can be seen to effectively ensure that the majority of the outcomes (particularly in terms of the findings and recommendations) of this research are both non-repeatable and non-transferable. The only exception to this was the PEF, which was identified in Chapter 9 as transferable to other situations. Additionally, some of the findings and recommendations resulting from this research, while they are not transferable, have a wider relevance particularly in relation to the development of a better understanding of the complexities associated with rural community development and rural development in general. Part II of this chapter examines these wider implications of the research in more depth.

PART II THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section examines the wider implications of the research findings for theories of rural community development in particular and theories of rural development in general.

10.5 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THEORY

10.5.1 The Nature of Rural Communities

The concept of a rural community has long been associated through the work of Tonnies (1950) and others with the notion of a simple homogeneous and self-contained unit located in a peripheral area, where ties of kinship are important. The findings of this research do not support this concept. This research identified the existence of substantial divisions and a whole range of disparate groups and individuals in each of communities under examination. Substantial divisions were identified in the community in Laggan in particular, a community that should (in theory) perfectly fit Tonnies archetypal model for a community. The finding of this research support the support the work of Wright (1992) and Cohen (1995) who argue that rural communities are neither homogenous nor simple. Moreover this research also dispels the notion of simple spatially defined community membership. A community is, as Chambers and McBeth (1992) argue much more than a collection of individuals sharing some common space.

The findings of this research suggest in a similar way to Bradley and Lowe (1984) that issue of community membership and non-membership are more about belonging to a local social system. In Laggan for example community membership was defined in relation to whether individuals were considered as locals which implied community membership, or as incomers whereupon community membership clearly had to be earned, through 'quiet' participation and support for ongoing community activities. The time it took to earn community membership varied substantially depending on the particular individual involved. This clearly supports Burnett's (1998) work on incomer and local rural development discourse in Scotland. Moreover, this research endorses the arguments of Wright (1992) who argues that not only are rural communities social constructions but that their membership is also socially constructed and therefore influenced by a whole range of factors.

Another finding associated with the nature of rural communities related to the issue of scale, not something that has previously received much consideration. This research identified that there was a scale at which a community becomes so large that it cannot be considered as a community but rather as a collection of communities, as was the case in the Cavan Monaghan case study. It was, however, beyond the scope of this research to attempt to define at what point this change occurs.

10.5.2 Motors for Change

The findings of this research suggest that the motors for change within rural community development operate at a whole range of levels. At a macro level changes in global markets and market places, in terms of production, trade, labour and finance all have downstream effects for community development in places like Laggan and Cavan. Changes in the global timber markets together with changes at a national level for example, led to a programme of rationalisation within Forest Enterprise that in turn resulted in the loss of a substantial number of local forestry operations in Laggan. This in turn prompted a number of local people to seek jobs as forestry contractors. Working as forestry contractors these individuals can now find themselves working away from home over extended time periods, thereby fundamentally affecting the ability of these individuals to participate in ongoing community activities. In the same way changes such as the re-structuring of Common Agricultural Policy can be seen to have had very significant effects on locally based rural community development in both Cavan Monaghan and Laggan. The globalisation of world markets clearly has, as Craig (1998) suggests, the ability to affect ongoing rural community development.

This research also identified a number of key factors at a local level that can act as motors of change. Key among these was, as Selsky, (1991) and Drewitt *et al.* (1988) have

identified, the initiative of certain key individuals or group of individuals, who were willing to experiment and who were prepared to invest a substantial amount of time and energy into the process. This was clearly evidenced in Laggan in relation to the establishment of the Forestry Initiative and in Cavan Monaghan in relation to the establishment of the Cavan Monaghan Co-operative itself, the first ever cross-county organisation in that area. Another local motor of change (identified by Vazquez-Baraqyero (1992) in another context) included the advent of a community-based crisis that created a common cause about which the wider local community was prepared to take collective action. The impetus for the establishment of the community owned Trading Company to manage the Laggan shop for example, grew from the threat of an impending decision by the then owners to close the shop permanently. Achievement was another important motor for change identified within the research carried out in Laggan in particular. Rural community development activities ongoing in Laggan at the time of the research clearly had grown and built on the firm foundations of earlier community led activities and on the enhanced confidence of community members as a result of their achievements.

10.5.3 The Nature of Rural Community Development

The findings of this research support the view of McCarthy *et al.* (1995) that the main focus of rural community development is social development (increased participation, better local leadership, enhanced skills, etc.) which may or may not lead to socio-economic/economic development. Rural community development can therefore be seen to primarily support the development of communities rather than economic development by communities.

10.5.3.1 Participation

Participation has been widely recognised by Bryden (1997), Moseley and Cherrett (1994), Chambers (1992; 1983) and others as an important element in the process of rural community development. The findings of this research endorse Midgely *et al's* (1986) argument that the quality and nature of participation involved in a particular development initiative. Consideration of the membership of a particular group alone was not found to be

a good signifier of levels of participation, given that some individuals, while they may have been members of a particular group, did not participate and were therefore members in name only. Levels of participation were found to vary considerably within this research, supporting the identification by Arnstein (1969) of a whole range of different levels of participation. The findings of this research suggest that there is a need to build further on the work of Arnstein (1969) and others with the adoption of a broader conception of participation based on the different ways in which people chose to participate in the development process. In particular the evidence from this research suggests that there is a need to include consideration of the nature of participation in the local and social economy, which would include support for local services (schools, shops, surgery) and attendance at local community functions.

This research found that full participation is not always possible or necessary given the evidence from the case studies that there will always be people who for whatever reason choose not to participate and whose right not to participate needs to be respected. The findings of this research therefore clearly support the work of Bryden *et al.* (1997) and Curtin and Varley (1991) who argue that the critical issue within participation is its representativeness rather than its comprehensiveness. The important issue is to ensure all the different interests are represented in a meaningful way rather than ensuring everyone participates. This research also found that consensus was not necessary, the important issue was as McDowell (1994) suggests in his work, a common cause under which individuals could unite collectively. The evidence of this research suggests therefore that it is inclusion that is the key objective of effective participation and an effective participation process.

10.5.3.2 Capacity building

The important role of capacity building within the process of rural community development has been highlighted extensively (Shorthall & Shucksmith, 1998; Murray & Dunn, 1995; Kearney *et al.* 1994) and the evidence of this research supports this view. The formal mechanisms for supporting capacity building which include animation, facilitation and

training have been extensively explored and highlighted within the NESC (1994) report and by others including Shorthall and Shucksmith (1998) Murray and Dunn (1995) and Bennett (1989). The findings of this research suggest that there are also a series of more informal mechanisms that provide support for capacity building. Discussions and debates within groups and between groups were for example identified in this research as a key mechanism through which individual participants learned how to communicate and to articulate their views in a more effective way. In the same way, achievement of simple tasks by individuals and by groups was seen to provide a simple and effective mechanism through which their confidence and their capacity could be enhanced. This research argues therefore for greater recognition of the existence and importance of more informal mechanisms for supporting ongoing capacity building at all levels.

10.5.3.3 Empowerment

The rhetoric surrounding the concept of empowerment makes it difficult to say exactly what it is and what role it can play in rural community development given that it can be used in a broad range of contexts with a whole variety of meanings. The findings of this research would support the definition of Schuftan (1996) who views it as a process through which people understand, upgrade and use their capacity to better control and power over their own lives, through which groups change and develop. This suggests that empowerment is both a process and an outcome of rural community development. It is not a simple or straightforward process and the findings of this research suggest it might be easiest conceptualised as a meta-process that encapsulates a number of other more distinctive processes including participation, capacity building and partnership, with the exact nature of the mixture determined by local circumstances. The adoption of the concept of empowerment as a meta-process certainly provides a mechanism through which its complexity and context specific nature can be accommodated and as such may merit further consideration in the future.

10.5.3.4 Role of professional development staff

The role of professional rural community development staff with the development process is not something that has been the subject of much serious consideration except at an operational level. The findings of this research suggest, however, that the presence and actions of development professionals within a particular initiative can change the dynamics of the development process. In the Cavan Monaghan Case study for example, the employment and presence of development staff enabled the organisation to delegate a substantial level of responsibility to the staff team. This in turn raised questions in relation to the representativeness of the actions of the staff. This issue clearly needs to be examined in more detail, particularly as increasing numbers of professional development staff are recruited by individual local development organisations (Molloy *et al.* 1999).

10.5.3.5 The outcomes

The research supports of the work of McCarthy *et al.* (1995) as it demonstrates that the outcomes of rural community development can take a whole range of forms. Some of these outcomes are tangible and/or physical (for example the formalisation of previously informal groups) others are less tangible and more process-oriented, for example, increased levels of participation, and enhanced capacity to act. Rural community development is, however, as Kulkarni and Rajan (1991) argue, not simply about the achievement of particular outcomes or tasks, it is about development in the context of a collective existence or as Chambers and McBeth (1992) describe it, attaching community values to community energy. The findings of this research supports the views of Vazquez-Barqyero (1992) that consideration of the nature and effectiveness of rural community development needs to include consideration of the inclusiveness of both the processes involved and their outcomes. The nature of the research findings builds on this view to suggest that inclusiveness in terms of the inclusion of particularly marginalised groups is a fundamental issue for rural community development and rural community development practitioners. Another critical concern for rural community development identified both within this research and by others (Gamble & Weil, 1997; Bryden, 1994) is the issue of the longer term sustainability of particular

outcomes or processes within rural community development. It was not possible to examine this issue of sustainability in any depth, however, given the lack of any level of longitudinal analysis within the research.

10.5.4 The Role of Participatory Approaches within Rural Community Development

This research identifies the process of inclusive participation as an important element in the process of empowerment, as both the means and the objective of rural community development. This research also found that participatory approaches have a significant role to play within rural community development, thereby reinforcing the arguments of Narayan (1993), Marsden and Oakley (1990) and others. The findings of the research develop this further arguing that the more inclusive the participation involved, the more significant the participatory approaches can be, particularly in relation to the processes of rural community development. In specific terms, this research found that participatory approaches provided opportunities for more inclusive participation and greater collaboration between participants. The research also demonstrated as Ramage (1996) suggested that participatory approaches can empower participants to a level that they make small changes in ongoing practices and behaviours. Other significant roles for participatory approaches within rural community development identified within this research and supported by arguments from Rebein (1996) and Narayan (1993) included its role as a generator of knowledge. Another interesting and novel finding resulting from this research was the identification of participatory approaches as an innovative mechanism through which participants are sensitised to particular issues and through which sensitive issues can be discussed in a non threatening way, as was the case in Laggan.

10.5.5 The Nature of the Relationship between Rural Community Development and Rural Development

This research supports the view of Wright (1992) that rural community development is about inclusive social change and therefore focuses on the social development of

communities. The concept of rural development in contrast embraces the totality of factors affecting rural areas, considering everything from the structural causes of disadvantage to the creation of conditions in which locally based rural community development can be encouraged and supported (Stern, 1989). As outlined by NESC (1997) the focus of rural community development is to maximise the potential for growth in local areas through the participation of all sectors of the community in local decision making. The findings of this research suggest that while rural community development cannot overcome structural disadvantage it is a key part of the process of rural development and also a key objective of rural development. The relationship between rural community development and rural development is therefore a mutually reinforcing one with progress in one facilitating progress in the other and vice versa.

10.6 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Keane (1997) argues that theories are helpful to practice because they provide a useful frame of reference and a process for bringing some new perspectives into existence. This section seeks to highlight the importance of practice (in terms of this research) for rural development theory. At a general level, as with all research, this specific piece of research contributes to a fuller array of knowledge on which to support and develop rural development theory.

At a more specific level, the research findings (in terms of their actual context-specificity and multidimensional nature) support the current social and political economy approach to rural development theory, which stresses the importance of ongoing social and economic relations in their social and economic setting (Marsden *et al.* 1996). These social and political economy approaches are important because they seek to explore how combinations of different forces including the market, public and community interests and networks carry forward development and therefore also how uneven development occurs. They recognise that rural development at a local level is dependent on the nature and extent of external

(global) and local economic, social and political factors affecting a particular area (Bryden, 1997). This research is significant because it highlights the context-specific complexities that result from the interaction of these different factors in two very different situations.

Munton (1995) attributed considerable significance to the importance of power relationships in relation to the existence and growth of disparities between rural areas. He argues that these power relationships are likely to be dominated by external rather than internal linkages. This research serves to balance and complement this view through its focus on the complexity of local power relations and the extent to which they can firstly explain disparities and secondly direct change to address disparities (Marsden & Wrigley, 1996). It highlights the diversity of interests that exist at a local level and the various mechanisms that can be used to encourage and support collective action. Moreover, it outlines the importance of multi-sectoral and participative approaches that seek to bring about social and economic change.

This research identifies how different groups participate or do not participate in the change process. This explanation of the existence of different levels of participation is important for rural development theory since it helps to dispel the assumption that economic growth benefits all rural residents equally (Hobart,1993). The research outlines some of the various ways particular individuals or groups have been excluded, together with the role and the significance of inclusive collection action at local level. All of these insights have implications for the development of a better understanding of the role and the potential of local social relations with rural development. This research does not however provide any support for the idea of the emergence of a new social class as a result of ongoing rural change (Hoggart *et al.* 1995; Murdock & Marsden, 1994). The research did however identify a series of local factors in the Laggan case study, including length of residency, which contributed to the ability of individuals to participate in ongoing community activities. Power at a local level was also found to have partly shifted, from the property owners/farmers to others (service providers) in Laggan, thereby providing some supporting evidence for Marsden's (1995) and Jones's (1995) identification of re-structuring as an

important element of the political economy approach to rural development theory. In overall terms, however, this research tends more toward the regulationist approach which although linked to restructuring theory places an increased emphasis on the ways in which people and social agencies and factors direct change (Marsden & Wrigley, 1996). Another important finding of this research for rural development theory relates to the identification of participatory approaches as an effective mechanism through which more inclusive collective action can be facilitated at a local level. This research has also highlighted the transferability and wider relevance of participatory approaches in the promotion of collaborative decision making and problem solving. As such, it is suggested that inclusive participatory approaches have potential and relevance for wider application within rural development, specifically in relation to the promotion of more inclusive networks at all levels.

10.7 FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this research conducted in two case studies clearly demonstrate that participatory evaluation can make a positive contribution to rural community development and to the process of rural community development in particular. The participatory evaluation approach was found to mirror the participatory capacity building ethos of rural community development itself. The exact nature and extent of the contribution of the participatory approach varied significantly between the case studies depending on a number of factors including the nature and extent of the participation involved and the scale of the study. It is very difficult therefore to make definitive statements about the potential of participatory approaches for rural community development given the existence of such variability within the research. Moreover, the research is only based on the application of a particular participatory approach in two case studies. There is a need for further research before the extent and nature of the contribution of participatory approaches to rural community development can be fully determined.

Research is also required to examine the application of participatory approaches within other approaches to rural community development. This would enable comparisons to be made between the role of participatory approaches within different approaches to rural community development. The application of participatory approaches within other initiatives similar to the LEADER model in Cavan or the spontaneous development approach in Laggan would enable more meaningful conclusions to be drawn about the potential of participatory approaches for these models of rural community development.

This research noted a number of limitations associated with the participatory approach particularly in relation to the lack of measurement. Further research is needed to explore whether there is scope for the introduction of a greater degree of measurement within the approach and what form this measurement might take. Research is also needed to explore the potential that exists for triangulation between locally constructed participatory evaluation approaches and more theoretically informed evaluation approaches.

This research has highlighted the substantial resource implications that arise from the application of participatory approaches. Given these substantial resource implications, further research is required to outline exactly what is additional, that the participatory approach can provide. There also needs to be some investigation of the potential for the establishment of a mechanism/a benchmark (perhaps a series of criteria) which could be used to assess the quality and effectiveness of a particular participatory approach. Given that the review of the effect of the evaluation (undertaken some months after evaluation completion) provided interesting insights, in relation to the relevance of the utilisation of the evaluation, there is clearly also scope for the introduction of a more longitudinal assessment of the longer-term effects of evaluations.

This research has focused on the application of participatory approaches using an external evaluator over a limited time period. The identity and methods of operation of this evaluator were found to have had a profound effect on both the evaluation process and the evaluation outcomes. Participatory approaches can, however, be applied in a number of

other ways, using an evaluation team (which can be constituted in a number of different ways), using existing staff or indeed through a combination of these mechanisms over either a limited time period or indeed on an ongoing basis. Further research is required to explore the relative merits and implications of these different approaches for rural community development.

At a more general level, considerable additional research is required to identify mechanisms and systems that can be used to measure the extent and nature of the less tangible outcomes of rural community development including capacity building and participation. This research is particularly important if the full potential of rural community development is ever to be realised and more importantly valued at a wider level.

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